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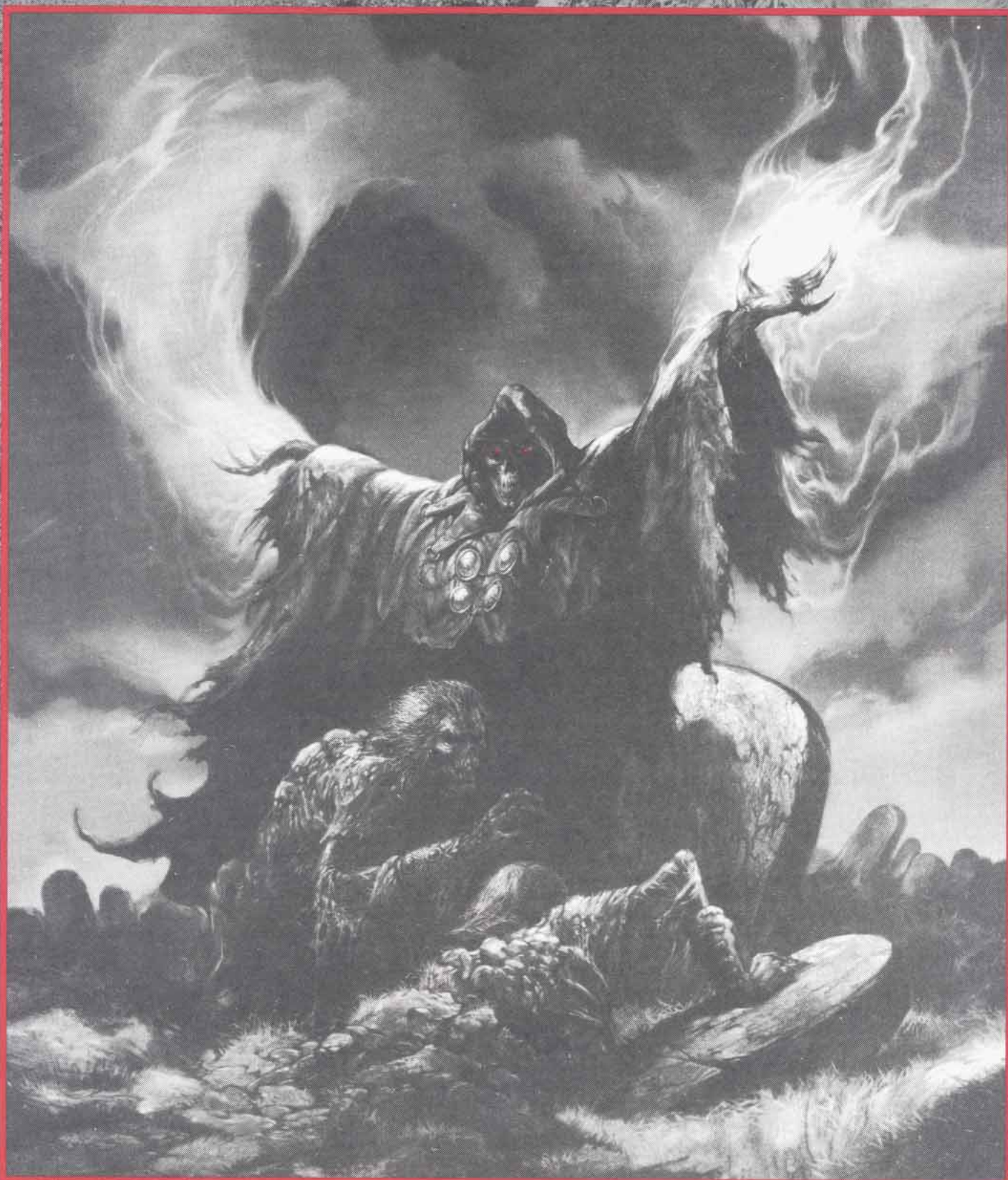
Official Game Accessory

## Van Richten's Guide to the Lich





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# INTRODUCTION



D

*Death be not proud, though some  
have called thee  
Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not  
so,  
For those whom thou think'st thou  
dost overthrow  
Die not, poor Death, nor yet canst  
thou kill me.*

—John Donne

Who knows what arcane experiments are carried out by powerful wizards secluded in their mystical towers? We who are uninitiated to the machinations of spells and other magical phenomena can only wonder about the events that take place in a mage's private study. We can only barely fathom the voluminous tomes of secret knowledge upon which these men and women pour their attentions.

The fruits of such labor can be of wondrous benefit to persons throughout the lands. A goodly wizard's reward is the admiration and gratitude of us all, and the knowledge and satisfaction that our world has benefited and is a better place to raise our children.

On the other hand, a mage also may elect to call forth the most vile creatures and evil magicks we could imagine.

Sometimes, in exchange for assisting evil agents who desire a foothold into our realm, these unwise mages are granted great powers to wield over their fellow man. And I fear that there are too many mages who pursue this opportunity over the considerations of the state of our world. For these mages, treachery awaits. Wizards who follow evil paths do not understand that one cannot trust a creature that, by its nature, lives to betray.

Still other mages seek those secrets of power, themselves. They hope to gain knowledge that evil and powerful creatures jealously guard for themselves. Such a mage believes that it is better to enter the perilous halls of power

himself, using his own efforts, than to rely upon the questionable graces of others. The magnitude of this struggle is great. There are many secrets that evil uses to pervert our world—secrets so elusive that a mortal must expend every ounce of his (or her) strength and spirit to acquire them.

This devotion is, no doubt, the means by which the mage is subverted, changed. He loses sight of the pursuits of normal life and becomes obsessed with seeking the keys to power. Eventually, the mage realizes that he cannot learn those secrets in his short lifetime. He finds that he must secure a method of continuing his researches and experiments for years, perhaps even centuries, to come.

For this incredibly ambitious wizard, there is but one way: he must transform himself into a different creature, one that will outlive his mortal shell so that he might continue his arcane efforts.

During a full moon, this mage imbibes a potion that instantly kills him—yet his spirit survives! His spirit actually dispossesses itself of his body. While in this state, the spirit acclimates itself to dark energies that are the source of pure evil. The spirit of the wizard becomes sympathetic to the heart of evil so that it may learn new and more potent secrets in the future.

The spirit eventually returns to the body, but in the interim the body shrivels and mummifies into a twisted mask of death. This corpse rises from its own grave, eyes alight with a scarlet lust for knowledge and power. The mage has died, yet it lives now and forever as a corpse. Now it has the means to pursue its twisted—nay, *mangled*—destiny.

Perhaps after this vile transformation, the mage within the crusted shell revels in its accomplishment. If so, it will likely be the last true human feeling the wizard experiences, for he has consigned himself to an eternal existence that denies the sweet fruits of mortality and replaces them with the sour rewards of the pursuit of evil.

The mage has forsaken his mortal identity



# INTRODUCTION



altogether. Now it adopts a name which it feels is more appropriate to its station. Whatever arcane synonym for evil the creature takes, we will know it for what it truly is: *lich*. It is a name to be uttered with cursed breath and contempt.

## My Path to the Dread Arcane

I dislike expounding upon myself and my exploits for two reasons: First, I am by nature a reticent man with little inclination to boast of or excuse my actions and, second, I have no wish to expose too much of myself to those who would see me halted in my quest to destroy the living dead. If there is one thing that the lich has taught me, it is that knowledge is the greatest of all powers, and so I would not have my enemies know too much of me.

Nevertheless, I cannot expect the reader to accept this treatise without some qualification. Therefore, I will briefly introduce myself and then explain my involvement with and study of one of the most deadly beings to poison the

land with its ruthless ambitions.

I was a doctor by profession, and might have happily remained so had the black hand of Fate not closed upon me. One day, my beloved son was kidnapped by the Vistani—curse their gypsy hearts forever—and sold to a vampire, a blood-drinking creature of the night who masqueraded as an honorable nobleman named Baron Metus. Even now it rends my heart to explain that I was forced to lay my own son to rest at the point of a wooden stake!

Baron Metus, in retaliation, murdered my beautiful wife, and thus was I cast out of happiness forever. Once I sipped the finest wine of family bliss, but now I choke on the bitter dregs of revenge!

Vampires became the first targets of my vengeance, and I dedicated myself to learning all that was humanly possible to know about them. I lost many friends and comrades along the way, each for whom I would weep fresh tears at every sunset, had they not been as dedicated to the cause of justice as am I. It is



# INTRODUCTION

also of some comfort that their bloody sacrifices have yielded invaluable information, culminating in an extended treatise on vampires—a volume which I pray will save countless spirits from eternal slavery. It is with great satisfaction that I proclaim that Baron Metus is now a pile of dust in a sunny meadow.

It was not long before my notoriety as a vampire hunter led me to the study of incorporeal undead. These beings also have taken their toll upon me and those whom I hold dear. In fact, I have felt the chilling touch of a ghost upon my own breast, and I have lost precious years from my life. I even have had to study entire volumes of *my own* research in order to relearn knowledge lost to the memory-sapping grip of one peculiar night phantom.

After the completion of my meditation on ghosts, there was a brief time when I hoped that I might finally lay down my sagely mantle and retire, but that sweet dream may be forever beyond my grasp. I have realized that the land of the Mists is populated with a multitude of strange and evil things, but few are those who will chase them down and kill them once and for all. It occurs to me that I have accrued extremely specialized experience that too many others have died pursuing. If I quit now, others will perish where I might succeed. And, I guess, a few more scars upon my heart and body may preserve the freshness and innocence of others.

With these convictions upon me, I am compelled by conscience and need to take up the quill and parchment and write of one of the most vile, damnable beasts to plague the world, the lich.

I first became aware of these creatures through a wizard friend of mine, named Shauten. Shauten was one of my comrades-at-arms in the battle against darkness, and a powerful one at that. He was ever-secretive, ever-enigmatic, yet I accepted his eccentricities because his part in my cause was indispensable. More than once Shauten cast a last-moment spell that saved us all.

Yet Shauten's own agenda might be called

traitorous by some. His part in our hunt for the most powerful of the undead was but a quest for knowledge of the necromantic. As our association lengthened, Shauten grew increasingly withdrawn, preoccupied with research of his own.

In the end, I learned of his attempt to make the leap to immortality—he attempted to deprive me of my heart, to facilitate his transformation to lichdom. Of course, he relented at the last moment, and I believe in my heart that his feelings of friendship for me ultimately spoiled his most crucial spell and saved my life. For that—for *all* the times he saved my life—and for the invaluable information that he imparted along the way, I shall always name him “friend.”

## The Lich of Darkon

I am afraid that there is a lich among us. I shudder at the realization that this monster has been in a position of ultimate power over us for as long as anyone here can remember.

Our illustrious ruler, Lord Azalin, is almost surely a lich!

I fear that he is no more the wizard-king he outwardly claims to be than it is safe to walk the countryside at night during a full moon. I know not what he called himself—what his true name was—before he transformed himself to lichdom. It does not matter, though, since that person died with the drinking of the lethal potion which began the ritual.

What is important for us to keep at the forefront of our thoughts is that we may be living under the rule of someone who is far from human. Although there has been talk of his extended life span, of how it seems he has outlived everyone in the entire realm, and how this has been achieved through his own magic—it is not true. If he is indeed a lich, then we must somehow, through some monumental effort, drive him from our land.



# INTRODUCTION

## My Discovery

My knowledge of our ruler's true nature was not clear to me at first. It was Shauten who put me on the scent that led me to the discovery. We were in a carriage on the road between Il Aluk and Rivalis, in my native Darkon. It was during the day, as we had left at the break of dawn in order to reach our destination before nightfall.

We were passing through the forest, roughly at the midpoint between the two cities, when we rounded a sharp curve and found the road blocked. To my horror, I realized that the road was littered with corpses! I looked for an overturned carriage, thinking one might have taken the curve at too great a speed and turned to its side, but I saw none. My thoughts raced as I considered my function as a doctor. How would I care for so many people? How many could we take to Il Aluk for care, and how many would have to be left behind?

These thoughts were disrupted when Shauten alerted me to a more horrifying fact: the dead were rising and moving toward us!

Each of them appeared to have been rotting for months at the least. Their eye sockets glowed with a dull red gaze. They moved upon the carriage, making no sound save for their shuffling feet upon the dusty road.

I shouted to the driver to turn us around, but my call went unanswered. I exited the coach to see what had happened to him, and he was nowhere to be seen! I therefore took the reins of the horses myself, calling for the driver all the while. Shauten joined me at the driver's seat, and we turned the horses around quite easily; they were only too glad to retrace their steps. Nevertheless, the undead were upon us and it became necessary to fend them off.

I reached into my black satchel and produced my holy symbol—an iron and silver relic that has always afforded me protection—and thrust it confidently in their rotting faces. They immediately grabbed me and pulled me into their midst! It was the quick words and fingers of Shauten that blasted them clear of me and enabled our fortunate escape.

As I sent the horses into a gallop to carry us as quickly as possible from the encounter, I saw a lone, tall man, dressed in the finest robes, with a crown upon its head, and I recognized the raiment of Lord Azalin himself! And in that moment of recognition, I espied a bright crimson fire in his eyes to match that of his undead host, and I fancied that he appeared no more alive than any of them!

Later, when I remarked upon the monsters' immunity to my holy symbol, Shauten replied that they were minions of magic, not of death.

It was not until much later, when Shauten nearly consumed me in a necromantic rite of passage, that I made the connection between Azalin and his minions, and I knew that my land was ruled by the hand of Death.

Now, with a core of research and yet a few more harrowing experiences behind me, I present the latest of my guides to the creatures of darkness. As always, the reader must bear in mind that the evidence presented herein is largely anecdotal and that nothing in these lands can be taken for the absolute truth. Still, if experience is the best teacher, then the reader may profit from this honest effort to expose the well-guarded secrets of the lich.

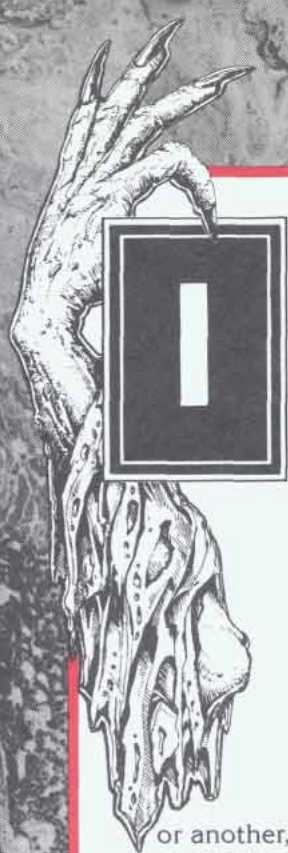
May it shed light upon the subject as the sun bears down upon the dusty remains of Baron Metus!

*Editor's Note:* Game applications of Dr. Van Richten's guide will appear in gray-screened text, each entry following the text to which it applies. Ideally, only the Dungeon Master will read the material contained in these blocks while players will learn through their characters' experiences. There is also an appendix following the "Conclusion," again strictly for the DM's eyes.

Note that the powers ascribed to liches herein are those which belong to those undead wizards of the RAVENLOFT® campaign environment. Refer to the *Monstrous Compendium* for more information regarding these monsters.



# I: NECROLOGY



*Immortality is not a gift,  
Immortality is an achievement;  
And only those who strive mightily  
Shall possess it.*

—Edgar Lee Masters

As many types and races of people are scattered over the land as there are species of wildflowers that wistfully dot the countryside. Strong elements of language, custom, and belief define these races, setting them apart from one another.

But there is one characteristic common to every sentient being: the quest for power.

Every creature has, at one time or another, wished that he had more control over his (or her, of course) destiny, that he had more power to realize his greatest potential. Such a dream might be as mundane as wishing for a good sword and the courage to assault an evil master or as grandiose as the conquest of a nation. Dreams such as this are what motivates a great many people to undertake adventuring and fortune-seeking.

It is, in theory, possible for a serf to become an emperor if his determination and body are strong. This would require an incredible struggle, for the typical serf starts with nothing, but by the grace of the gods and the strength in his heart, the slave may become a king. Power and glory are there for the taking, and such earthly happiness is attainable by anyone, as long as they can be satisfied with the *mere* conquest of the world.

If the adjective “mere” seems out of place in this context, the reader must have patience until the subject of this book is addressed.

The roguish fellow has an entirely different dream and a decidedly different method of seeing it become reality, but his highest goals are also firmly set in this world.

For priests, the most important quests of life are different. They have not so much to do with

power as with proving devotion to one's god or building a great temple where others can enjoy the hospitality of the priesthood and its religion. The greatest achievement of priestly glory lies not in this world, but the next.

Such is not the case with the mage, which brings us to the subject at hand.

To become a mage, one must be exceptional in ability from the start. There are natural prerequisites—factors of intelligence, strength of personality, and persistence in the face of difficult matters of mind and body—which must be present to learn the secrets of magic.

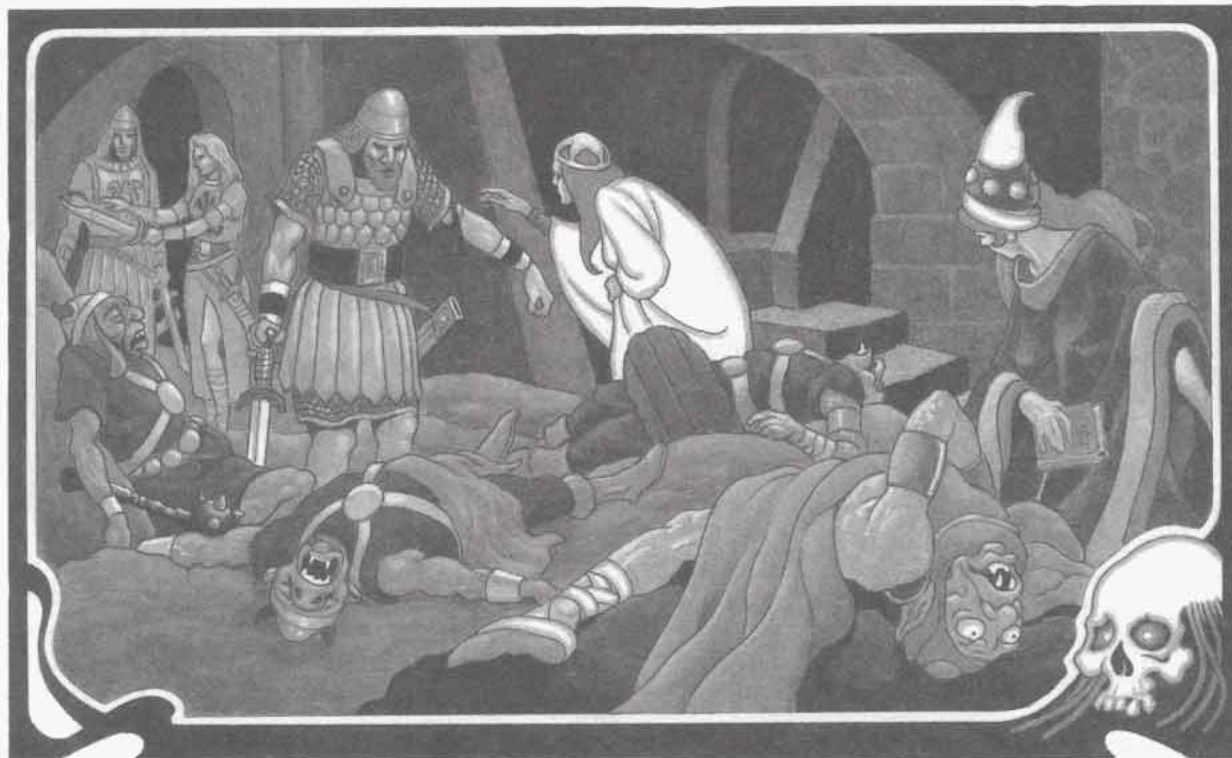
Once some basic secrets are known, the mage can begin a pursuit which is endemic to all mages: acquiring the knowledge of more spells, the ability to command greater and greater magic. This is a struggle that continues throughout the career of the mage, and one that never truly sees an end. In other words, the wizard's life begins in excellence, but life is seldom long enough to realize the full potential of that preeminence.

There are always more spells to learn, more secrets to know. There are secrets that remain buried in arcane texts which have gone unread for thousands of years. There are puzzles that unlock the mysteries of the universe and lead to whole new planes of existence. For a mage who is foremost a scholar, these are secrets that *must* be found. The passion to learn more is a driving flame within a mage's heart and spirit, a part of what makes him what he is.

For the mage, *knowledge equals power*, and the acquisition of unlimited knowledge often seems to be within his grasp. Whereas the serf begins in an environment where the ability to shape destiny is as rare as an eclipse, the mage begins his career already wielding power that only a few dream of manipulating. This power can become an insatiable drive that carries the wizard beyond a career pursuit. It can become an addiction of the mind and spirit, and build beyond a driving flame into an insidious inferno that burns a mage hollow of other qualities from the inside out, until only the desire for more, ever *more* magical power remains.



# I: NECROLOGY



In this quest for knowledge, some mages pass a point where the unthinkable no longer exists. They pursue for long years the secrets of a certain arcane ritual which will grant them a twofold prize: knowledge of forbidden secrets and the acquisition of power that is unmatched—power to be gained over the span of an eternal life, or rather, *unlife*. If one can become a lich, then he or she will become the most powerful form of undead known!

The transformation of the mage's body into a lich grants incredible powers. The mortal individual that starts the ritual of transformation into a lich and the being that ultimately becomes a lich are no longer the same person. The lich is immensely powerful, and at the same time it is in a position to gain even *more* power and knowledge: a lich can exist for *centuries*, far outlasting any nonmagical race!

The lich's mind seems to withstand time very

well, too. While the psychology of a vampire often deteriorates with time, there is something about the transformation that allows the lich to remain sane—or at least motivated with its own goals, even though they may be unfathomable to humankind—during this virtual immortality.

With this amount of time, the lich can undertake projects that are so far reaching as to be beyond the scope of most mortals' apprehension. With enough time, knowledge of almost any secret can be gained.

What troubles me the most is that there are mages walking this world who would sacrifice not just their lives, but their very humanity—the qualities of emotion and love, the aspirations of mortals made in the image of the divine—just for the sake of *acquisition*. Such ambition makes any man dangerous, but if that man is made essentially immortal and given the power to realize his goals, then what hope is there for the world around him?



# I: NECROLOGY

## Risk Factors

I would like to propose an axiom: *One cannot acquire great power without already having it.*

This suggests the level of expertise necessary to become a lich and, hence, the power of that creature even at its inception. Given the relative rarity of lichs in comparison to the number of

purported to have been written by someone known only as the Dweller in the Jacinth Chamber. This text is very old indeed, and I believe that there are many more lichs in existence today than when the text was written.

*... and I was also told during this nether-spanning discussion that [this tanar'ri]*

























































































































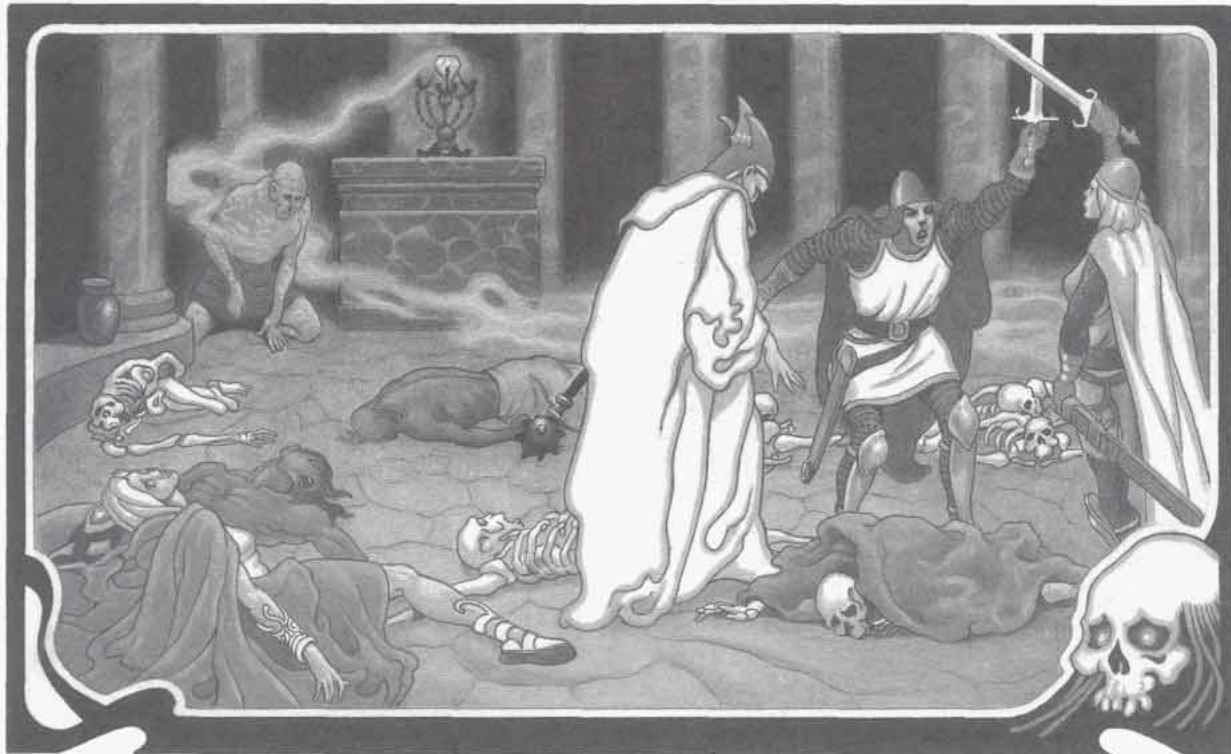








## VI: KEYS TO A SUCCESSFUL HUNT



destroy one. A hero who satisfies himself with the acquisition of a lich hoard, without wholly destroying its owner, is taking a terrible risk! Liches have formidable memories, and they will exterminate one's children's children's children to retrieve what has been taken from them.

I would suggest that the only act which would ensure that mortals are no longer troubled is to destroy every object they encounter and return to their homes in peace and without the fear of retribution or ambush. Devices held within such lairs are the products of evil. They were forged by black fires, crafted with dead hands, and enchanted with arcane necromancy. They should be destroyed, for they were not ever meant to be used by mortal hands.

At the DM's option, every (or nearly every) object found within a lair may be considered to be cursed. The use of such items may result in reversed effects, the summoning of a powerful, evil being, or a Ravenloft powers check (perhaps at double the normal chance of failing).

### Purification

**T**he efforts of the undead are as a boil upon the land: It must be removed if the rightful owners—the living mortals—are ever to enjoy to the peace they deserve. I strenuously recommend the destruction of *all* of the lich's enchantments, including its alchemical notes. Even that will leave us with a lair that may tempt other creatures of evil to inhabit it, to re-stoke the cold fires within and establish a base camp like a recurring malignant growth. It is best to convert the lair, if possible, to uses that are beneficial to humanity. Hence I say that the responsible lich hunter will notify the local authorities and the local priesthood of the vacancy, as well as the status of the phylactery.

But the stench is thick amongst temples of evil, and they are not easily cleansed. Barring a conversion to more a useful state, the best course of action is to completely reduce the lair to dust, to seal it from intrusion for all eternity.



## VIII: STRANGE AND DEADLY MINIONS



I have compared the lich to a general who commands his forces from the rear lines. Continuing the analogy, mindless undead are the foot soldiers and intelligent undead are the lieutenants. In this chapter, I will discuss what might be compared to the general's majors, colonels, and his aides-de-camp. They are undead peculiar to the legions of the lich because they are the products of the powerful black magic that only a lich can wield.

Specifically, I am referring to the magically-endowed undead creature, which I have named the *quasimancer*, to the fallen wizard, which I have called the *vassalich*, and to the abominable *lich familiar*. These are servants who, to a smaller degree, mimic their master's deadly combination of magic use and undead status. Their special powers raise them above the ranks of common minions, yet the superiority they enjoy is little to rejoice in, even if they possess the free will to do so. They are pitiable creatures, miserable wretches who serve an evil master, mere battle fodder to an amoral commander who knows no shortage of replacement troops.

The extent to which these monsters pose a threat is variable. Taken by themselves, they offer a mildly dangerous combat adversary, certainly nothing beyond the skills of most seasoned adventurers. Yet each of them serves the lich in a special capacity that can geometrically multiply the master's effectiveness: These underlings can perform functions that hitherto required the presence of the lich itself. With the emergence of these creatures, the lich can remain safely out of harm's reach and thus conduct even more complex and wicked schemes. To the lich hunter, these minions represent yet another ring of defense to penetrate, and another depletion of precious strength and magic.

### Quasimancers

The lich's ability to manipulate the dead comes so naturally that it should be no surprise if the lich were to improve upon the method. Unlike a priest, whose puissance waxes and wanes with his favor in the eyes of the gods, the wizard generates his *own* magic and manipulates matter in a way that could be called, for the purposes of this comparison, scientific. Therefore, the lich is limited only by the scope of its research. In other words, the lich only need practice more powerful sorcery in order to create more powerful undead, and garnering more potent magic is about as natural an act as a lich can manage.

I wish that I had come to this conclusion myself—it seems so obvious—but it was my prized scout Markil who put me on to it during our hunt of the lich called the Bloody Hand:

*"First a pack of zombies comes pilin' through the hedges—no problem; we pound 'em into dust. Then some ghouls come draggin' behind—pretty smelly, but again no big issue; we hold our breath, and we burn 'em down. 'Course they all have the red-eye, but we know how deal with that, thanks to you, Van Richten. I, myself, like to look a stiff in the bread-box when I take it out.*

*"Then what I think is another ghoul comes into view and just stands there, lookin' at us. I finish off my last stiff and head for it, when I hear it whisperin' and see it wavin' its hands at me. Well, I never saw any stiff weaker than a vampire throw a spell, but I know what I'm lookin' at, so I yell 'duck' and then do the same. It's a damn good thing too, Doc.*

*"Sure enough, the stiff dumps a fireball into the party!*

*"To make a long story short, we focused on dustin' the magic cadaver, then we headed back here to tell you what happened."*

It was not long before we encountered more of the Bloody Hand's special minions and I was given the opportunity to observe them myself. They introduced a new complication to our



## VII: STRANGE AND DEADLY MINIONS

hunt, forcing us to change our combat strategy, advance even more cautiously, and rest even more often. Meanwhile, the Bloody Hand was absent from the war, taking advantage of our delays to advance its agenda elsewhere.

Despite those setbacks, I made good use of the spare time and studied these magic-using undead minions with an educated eye. Based on my observations, and the collective opinion of a dozen sages, I have some valuable information to impart to the reader regarding these creatures I call *quasimancers*.

Let us begin with two basic prerequisites. First, the use of wizard magic apparently requires some force of will. It is not enough to simply comprehend the workings of a spell; one must have the determination to drive magical forces to a desired end. Therefore, a candidate for quasimancer must retain at least part of its former life essence—its personality, if you will—in order to use magic. Second, the casting of magic almost always demands the use of the hands and other body parts in order to shape the spell. Therefore, a quasimancer must have a physical body, possessed of at least some dexterity, as well.

Mummies, vampires, and liches satisfy both prerequisites, but both mummies and vampires are difficult to control, even for a lich. (I do not believe that it is even possible for one lich to control another.) Also, both vampires and liches are already capable of wielding magic, so endowing them with spell abilities would be redundant.

I conclude, then, that the lich raises a special form of wight to serve as a quasimancer. The minion retains a small part of its former identity, and one freshly animated still maintains a viable physique for spellcasting. Furthermore, such a creature would be subject to the same absolute lich control exerted upon its lesser cousins, yet its orders from the “general” would include the use of offensive magic. To support my hypothesis, I have observed that quasimancers exhibit hand-to-hand combat techniques and other innate abilities common to the wight.

Let me caution the reader not to take this text too literally, here or anywhere. The ghost also satisfies the prerequisites for a quasimancer. Perhaps the lich can endow even the lowly skeleton with the ability to cast magic. Then again, perhaps such magic is not possible. Whatever the case, we cannot rest upon absolutes, for liches are making new breakthroughs in spell research even as I write this guide, and even as you read it. . . .

A quasimancer can command a company of skeletons and zombies, send them into a fray, and then saturate the area with highly destructive magic, obliterating its own troops and even itself. Indeed, one should not expect a quasimancer to stand aloof from the battle or the rest of the undead as a mage would, for it carries no expectations of survival into battle. The monster has no concerns for its underlings or for itself, so it makes an ideal leader of a suicide squadron. And because it outwardly appears to be no more than a common ghoul or wight, its actions may not always be noted or anticipated until too late, and so it is all the more deadly.

I have no positive suppositions to contribute to this matter, except perhaps that the knowledge of the quasimancer's existence should be enough to keep the hunter of undead monsters on his constant guard. If these minions encourage the reader to be ever vigilant, ever ready to face the unexpected, then even quasimancers have a good side . . . insignificant as it is.

As always, the DM is free to vary the origins and powers of the quasimancer, but here are some guidelines:

The quasimancer is specially raised by the lich and then magically endowed (see the spells *create minion* and *confer* in the DM Appendix). After it is successfully raised, it is allowed a saving throw to avoid being automatically controlled as are other undead of less than half the lich's Hit Dice (see Chapter II). This saving throw is allowed because of the artificial intelligence enhancement afforded



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during the creation of the quasimancer. If the roll succeeds and the minion is somehow able to escape the lich, it can be an opponent worthy of full NPC status for as long as the *create minion* spell lasts. (A clever creature might attempt to get a *permanency* spell cast upon it, thus negating the expiration of the spell.) At the DM's option, the quasimancer may reroll the saving throw for control once per week or more.

Quasimancers can enjoy the stats and abilities of their common cousins (see the *Monstrous Compendium*) with the following additional qualities, due to being the minion of a lich: They make all saving throws at the level of the lich who controls them; they are immune to *enfeeblement*, *polymorph*, *electricity*, *insanity*, *charm*, *sleep*, *cold*, and *death* spells; they exude a *fear aura*, 5-foot radius, requiring a successful save vs. spell or flee for 2d4 rounds.

### Vassaliches

**I** *was the most terrible thing I have ever seen, Dolf! No! Not the most terrible—the dreams it put into my head when I could no longer stay awake . . . when I put my wife's hand into a—No! I didn't do that! I didn't do that! Don't look at me!"*

*"It was the lich that put those thoughts in your head, Harmon. Let them go, they are not yours!" I cajoled him, realizing that his reason would not remain much longer. "Tell me about the minions. You were talking about the lich's minions, remember?"*

*"Yes, yes! It was horrid, horrid! Not just dead things—living things too: Men! A man became a lich before my eyes! He swallowed a stone—a diamond or something, I don't know. Then the lich . . . slit its rotted wrist open with its own fingernail and blood—no, not blood—ooze, gray ooze ran from the black hole!"*

*". . . And the man drank it! He drank the lich's—blood! He drank it, Dolf! And he fell down*



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*and screamed. And he changed. He shrivelled. He died! He lay there . . . dead . . . and . . ."*

*"And what, Harmon?"*

*"He got up, and he spit up the stone, into the lich's hand, and then he was a lich, too. . . !"*

—Notes from the night  
Harmon Ruscheider died

I have never met a creature like the one Dr. Ruscheider described on that evening when he came to me like a crazed animal beneath the full moon, but I have little doubt that they exist. There is so much evil around us, and there are so many exposed to temptations proffered by agents of that evil. It is sadly simple to conclude that a wizard of questionable values might strike a pact with a lich and become immortal, albeit undead. What mage does not crave the arcane secrets of the universe? What wizard would not consider the advantages of unlimited time to learn new magic? Who among *any* of us does not wish to live forever?

These sentiments are the genesis of the *vassalich*: a wizard who undergoes the transformation to lichdom under the sponsorship of a full lich, thus becoming an undead magic-user long before he could accomplish the feat himself. Such foolish mages are free-willed individuals who are yet slaves. They are capable of independent thought, abstract strategy, self-conducted research, and all intellectual processes available to a living man, but they have committed themselves to eternal bondage for a master who inevitably will use them as nothing more than another means to its own ends.

As people who are more intelligent than the average, mages should know the consequences of entering into such a relationship, or so I would assume. This may well be why I have never met one; they are extremely uncommon. Even so, I have shared Harmon Ruscheider's remarks with a few scholarly wizards, and I have made the following speculations upon the nature of the *vassalich*.

### Necrology

I would venture to guess that nearly all *vassaliches* were living students of the wizardly college of necromancy. A preoccupation with or sheer ambivalence toward death would certainly render the prospect of becoming undead less daunting. Hence, it may be expected that most *vassaliches* will wield death magic as a specialist of that dark school of necromancy.

*Vassaliches* most likely undergo a process similar to their master's when they become undead. They may drink a poisonous potion, or they may even partake of the lich's body fluid as Ruscheider suggested, but they then occupy a phylactery. Ruscheider's story also implied that the phylactery is given over to the lich, who presumably keeps it as the perfect instrument of leverage over its new minion. Thus, the lich has an absolutely loyal servant in complete control of sophisticated mental faculties. As long as the phylactery remains in the lich's possession, the *vassalich* must perforce do its sponsor's bidding.

Quick-thinking hunters will consider this: He who holds the phylactery of a lich, be it a *vassal* or otherwise, controls the lich! Furthermore, the phylactery of a *vassalich* may not be subject to the same security standards as the master's. A captured phylactery of a *vassalich* may be one of the deadliest weapons that a lich hunter could ever hope to wield . . . !

*Vassaliches* ideally are much rarer than liches; such slaves are bound to be more than a handful, and they are sure to draw undue attention as well—something few liches desire. For DMs who wish to role-play the creation of a *vassalich*, a number of conditions might be created to carry off a successful transformation.

For example, the wizard must fail at least two Ravenloft powers checks before the transformation will work. Perhaps the phylactery must be a gem of not less than 10,000 gp value, which the lich can wear ornamentally or keep with the rest of its



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treasure. Perhaps the new vassalich must rest after the conversion, like its master, but for ten full days.

The transformation, itself, might consist of joint spellcasting by the sponsor and the aspirant. Perhaps the lich casts *enchant an item* on the phylactery while the wizard drinks the prepared potion (see Chapter I), then the wizard casts *magic jar* before he dies. Next, the lich casts *reincarnation* and the vassalich is created.

The vassalich's phylactery would likely not be nearly as magical as that of the lich. It might be destroyed merely by an unenchanted weapon inflicting 25 points of damage upon it (saving throw vs. magical attacks apply).

### Powers

Wizards who become vassaliches probably gain their master's black aura to some extent, and they probably share its resistance to holy symbols and the same types of magic, but they surely must lack their master's experience and level of magical power. I suspect that vassaliches remain largely the same as they were in life, in terms of spellcasting ability. If there is any such gain upon transformation, then it must be paid for with the loss of endurance, mobility, or strength.

Vassaliches are reincarnated as monsters with HD equal to half (round down) of their former experience level, but they retain their former spellcasting abilities. They gain 1 HD every 10 years, which is equal to two experience levels in terms of spellcasting abilities, and they may become a full lich upon reaching 11 HD. However, they must first gain control of their phylactery and then follow all normal procedures for becoming a lich.

Vassaliches can be hit by unenchanted weapons, but they remain immune to *charm*, *sleep*, *enfeeblement*, *polymorph*, *cold*, *electricity*, *insanity*, and *death* spells. They are turned as liches. Of course, they can make the gaze attack that all lich minions enjoy (see Chapter VI). They also exude a fear aura with a 5-foot

radius; save vs. spell or flee for 2d4 rounds. Finally, they possess a chill touch for 1d4 points of damage; save vs. paralysis or behave as if *slowed* for 1d10 rounds.

It is suggested that characters who have never seen a vassalich be required to make a horror check upon an encounter, unless they have had at least two previous encounters with a lich.

### Psychology

The mind of a vassalich is sure to be an incredibly complex thing. They retain their memories and forces of personality after their transformation, which must mean that they continue to harbor within their breasts the same intense ambition that drove them to pursue vassalichdom in the first place. How it must grate upon them to become the absolute slave of another! No doubt, a candidate for transformation is absolutely loyal to the sponsor lich while he courts immortality, but once the deed is done, how long is it before the intelligent minion comes to resent his bond?

This line of reasoning leads me to two conjectures about these lesser liches: First, they may be more dangerous to the world while they are still mortals, for they can act as spies and thieves for the monster whom they wish to please. While they remain living men, they are capable of much more insidious and far-reaching damage, for who would guess at the ghastly station to which they aspire and realize that they are already minions of the lich? Second, they may be more dangerous to the lich when they are no longer mortals, for such ambitious creatures are sure to plot against the one who holds their phylacteries. After the transformation, egotism and ambition, to say nothing of basically evil character, quite likely estranges them from their masters. As long as the lich has their very life essence in its keeping, vassaliches' existences hang upon the whim of an evil persona; I think that I can safely venture to say that such an arrangement cannot be tolerable.



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While I have little advice to offer regarding living spies, I think that it may be possible for a clever hunter to poison the relationship between the lich and his vassal. The trick is to establish an alliance with the vassalich, and to do it without the lich's knowledge. The vassal is sure to be nervous about such an arrangement—after all, its master will crush its phylactery at the first hint of rebellion—but there is more than enough incentive to turn against the lich, and that is one fact upon which a lich hunter may almost certainly depend.

Many interesting adventure scenarios are possible with the inclusion of vassaliches. They may serve as nemeses to PCs who simply are not strong enough to deal with a true lich; in such cases, the lich may be busy in another realm while the vassalich runs the store or initiates exploits of its own. Vassaliches can be quite powerful, but never as much so as a true lich. Another adventure possibility lies in the seduction of a PC mage by a lich. Of course, it's expected that the mage will respond to the temptation only as a way to infiltrate the lich's defenses. If role-played well, the game of cat-and-mouse can be very exciting.

A PC may actually find himself forced by the lich, physically, magically, or otherwise, to undergo the transformation process as a result of role-playing. In this case, he becomes an NPC until his companions can destroy the vassalich's body, gain control of the lesser phylactery, clone the PC wizard (use of other bodies, alive or dead, may call for a powers check, depending on the circumstances), and cast both *magic jar* and *raise dead* or *resurrect* (apply all saving throws). A *wish* may be substituted for either spell.

On the other hand, there may be a few players who may attempt to role-play the transformation to vassalichdom. Any action to this end should result in a Ravenloft powers check, and any PC who actually goes through with the change immediately becomes an NPC.

### Lich Familiars

**T**here is but one priest of nature among the hunters of undead with whom I have traveled: Alanthir the half-breed elf. Until I met him, I believed that lawful priests of goodness were the stoutest foes of the walking dead, but this druid proved me wrong. Alanthir's utter condemnation of the unnatural state of living death was matched only by the ferocity he exhibited when he met one of them face to face. He wielded a magical scimitar that blazed like the sun in the faces of the undead, but often he actually cast it aside to tear skeletons literally limb from limb, reducing them to piles of bone with his rough, bare hands! Here, I thought, was the ultimate ally to my cause.

So I believed, until we met the lich Redfist's familiar—once a red-tailed hawk, but now a molting, rotted, batlike thing with a scream like an infuriated banshee. We first encountered it in the company of its master and were forced to flee for our lives, but Alanthir was choked with horror at the sight of the undead hawk, and he had to be dragged screaming from the battlefield. He became hopelessly obsessed with the bird—his eyes never left the heavens, and he muttered through every waking hour, complaining that "we must move quickly, quickly!"

When we had finally laid our deliberate plans for approaching the lich, Alanthir agreed to the strategy. Nevertheless, while we were still many miles from the suspected location of the lair, he espied the familiar circling high above, shifted his shape to that of a small bird before my very eyes, and darted into the sky before we could stop him! The undead hawk, apparently senseless of its master's will at the time, gave itself over to predatory instincts and gave Alanthir chase.

The druid could not hope to elude the hawk's talons, but he lured it into our midst before it snatched him in midair and they both tumbled to the ground in a death struggle. We immediately seized the opportunity and pounced upon the unnatural monster, even as it snapped



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*Alannthir's neck. With similar speed, we released the creature from its gruesome existence, driving a silver dagger through its leathery breast.*

*It seemed to me that Alannthir breathed a sigh of joy as he regained his humanoid form and died, but it was utterly drowned beneath a long, hideous shriek of the Redfist, which echoed across the realm. . . .*

—From the journal of Dr. Van Richten

Insofar as liches are wizards, it is reasonable that any number of them would have a familiar. Such a creature not only conveys special powers upon the lich, but it provides perhaps the only company that a lich will tolerate. The relationship between a mage and his familiar is quite intimate, but the lich's familiar may be the only friend it has in the entire universe.

On the other hand, the familiar of a lich must certainly be or become an evil thing. It may be that lich familiars endure an antagonistic tie to their masters and must be ruled with an iron fist. Perhaps these creatures rightly hate their masters, even more so because they cannot survive without the lich. This might explain why the Redfist's familiar chased Alannthir, putting both itself and its master at risk. I do not mean to suggest a familiar may be turned against the lich in the same manner as a vassalich. Rather, I think that some familiars may abandon their primary directives at crucial moments, heeding more basic instincts.

A wizard who has a familiar is faced with a dilemma when he contemplates lichdom: Perhaps his death may simply dissolve the bond between himself and his familiar, but it is quite possible that the separation adversely affects the mage. If upon the change he suffers a shock like that which mages experience upon the death of a familiar, the result could be absolute death. Therefore, I am inclined to believe that a lich will insist on taking his familiar into unlife with it, and that the familiar's life essence resides in the phylactery with its master.

However, I doubt that unliving immortality is acceptable to most natural creatures, even if

they are inextricably bound to a wizard. I would not be surprised if such a familiar actually rebelled in the face of this predicament. I do not wonder at Alannthir's rage over the Redfist's hawk; I'm sure the poor beast was thoroughly miserable.

As an aside, I see no reason why a lich could not call a familiar after its transformation, but I seriously doubt that any natural animal would answer its summons. Rather, the familiar of a lich would most likely be an undead thing itself.

A wizard can take its familiar with it into lichdom by forcing it to drink the potion of transformation. After doing so, the familiar makes a system shock roll at same level as the wizard: If it fails, the familiar dies and the lich must make a second system shock roll; if the roll fails, the lich dies irrevocably, just as if he had failed his first roll. If the roll succeeds, the lich still loses 1 point of Con permanently, and it must rest two full weeks before memorizing spells or conducting any strenuous activity.

Such a lich familiar actually resides in the phylactery with the lich. Therefore, it cannot be completely destroyed until the phylactery is destroyed, just like the lich.

For a lich-summoned familiar, the DM can consult any of the *Monstrous Compendiums* and choose a familiar appropriate to his or her campaign, or one may be randomly generated using the table provided below:

Lich Familiars Table

d20 Roll	Familiar (Enhancement)
1–5	Skeletal bat (hearing)
6–10	Dire wolf (smell)
11–15	Nightmare (speed)
16–17	Assassin imp (surprise bonus)
18–19	Necrophidius (silent movement)
20	DM's choice

Other candidates are darkenbeasts, berbelangs, mites, yeth hounds, gremlins, wichtlins, kani dolls, gurik cha'ahl, blood sea imps, eyewings, undead beasts (from the



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DRAGONLANCE® campaign world), cildabrins, orpsu, iron cobras, hell cats, and mephits. The lich may otherwise choose to create an undead version of virtually any monster by casting *raise dead* upon an expired monster of its choice and then binding it by casting *find familiar* and *charm monster*, or something to that effect.

In any event, a lich and its familiar exchange the same benefits enjoyed in all such bonds (see the wizard spell *find familiar*), with the following possible enhancements: the lich familiar's empathic link to its master is equal to the lich's Intelligence score in miles and naturally intelligent familiars can communicate telepathically with their masters.

As all liches in the RAVENLOFT® campaign environment are evil, so are their familiars, but a familiar's lawful or chaotic disposition can affect its relationship with its master. Chaotic evil familiars may abandon their master's commands and satisfy their basic instincts when out of range, and neutral evil familiars may rebel (10% base chance) against strongly lawful or chaotic instructions when out of range, but lawful evil familiars are always loyal. Natural animal familiars become neutral evil upon conversion to lichdom.

If a lich familiar's body is reduced to 0 hp, it must immediately roll for system shock at 85%. Failure indicates that the familiar is destroyed and the lich must then make a second system shock roll (same chance) to avoid its own destruction. If the roll is successful, the familiar returns to the safety of the phylactery and can inhabit another animal's corpse. If the familiar fails its roll but the lich succeeds, then the lich is deprived of spellcasting ability until it animates a new body for the familiar to inhabit.

Regardless of whether the familiar resides in the phylactery with its master or is a monster summoned after the transformation, the lich loses 1 point of Con permanently if its familiar is destroyed, just like living wizards.





## VIII: THE MENTALIST LICH



M

*y mind to me a kingdom is;  
Such present joys therein I find  
That it excels all other bliss  
The earth affords or grows by kind.  
—Sir Edward Dyer*

*I will not be able to speak of my  
experience in detail until I have put  
to rest the terrible visions I have  
suffered at the hands of Master  
Ulathar the lich.*

*It has no remorse or regard for the  
living—it barely took notice of us  
during a combat that was for us  
pitched and most dire. Only a fateful  
twist of luck turned the encounter  
from disaster to narrow victory. It  
used its twisted powers of the mind  
as freely as we breathe, and with an effect that I  
had never conceived. Its mind was the blackest  
pit of evil, and it reached out for us, twisting our  
spirits and tainting us in mere seconds.*

*My will now has been purged of the evils  
implanted in my mind. My spirit has been  
blessed and redeemed by the highest priests. Yet  
I cannot sleep at night, for even in the darkest  
rooms or the brightest days, I still see the lich's  
eyes boring into my mind like daggers of fire.  
—From the personal journal of Matthew  
Swiftsinger of Skald, in Kartakass*

Woe to the person who encounters a lich possessed of the secrets of the mind; who can, by hypnotic will alone, look into the depths of men's spirits. These beasts are like towers of iron fortitude, creating and driving their unlife not by magical means, but by the pure desire of their outstandingly evil will to continue, to enlarge their mental prowess, to stand upon the pinnacle of all that is human and to look beyond. The information about liches of these strange mesmeric abilities is very sparse. There are, however, some few threads of knowledge that I have been able to knit together into a web of tenuous conclusions.

Although there are liches who command

powers that are assuredly will-driven in nature or effect, a lich whose very undead state is derived from its mesmeric abilities is quite rare indeed. In fact, aside from the beast of evil spoken of in the journal of Matthew Swiftsinger, who seems to have served such a creature and then later confronted it while part of a group led by the infamous Harkon Lukas of Kartakass, only three other such liches have been rumored to exist.

As a scholar of the profane and evil, I have learned to accept much that defies the very precepts of logic—there is very little which I will ever call “impossible.” Even so, I was predisposed to dismiss the existence of the mental arts as chicanery or magic. I found it difficult to distinguish between a master of mental powers and an archmage of the arcane, until the journal of Matthew Swiftsinger came into my hands some time ago. Swiftsinger was a bard, himself, but he was also a practitioner of the mental arts.

I was given Swiftsinger's personal journal while on a werewolf-hunting expedition in Kartakass (yet another subject about which I must write someday). It was in that shadowy realm that I first heard stories of the mesmeric lich. As I am well aware of the preponderance of bards in that land, I was inclined to dismiss the notion as a bit of dramatic narrative. However, my exhaustive research techniques inevitably led to the bard's journal.

Now having digested its contents, I must conclude that his accounts ring so true on so many counts that I am forced to consider Swiftsinger's mental talents as a science apart from that of magic. Even more disturbing, it would seem that he honed his talents under a mentalist lich. I have included a pertinent passage from his journal below. I think the fact that he never spun a tale or lyric from this experience lends credence to the truth of it.

*“. . . and though I was ever possessed of the gift  
to look into men's minds and see the secrets they  
withheld from the world, I believed it to be but  
the intuition of the artist, a mere conceit of*



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*sensitivity that opened my mind to truth and the human heart.*

*And then did I make acquaintance with Master Ulathar (as he named himself, though it was just another of his prevarications), and he inducted me into his elite circle of mentalists. He taught me not only how to probe the secrets of others' minds, but how to subvert their convictions with my own notions.*

*Quite nearly did I lose sight of truth, and my power to tell it, before I glimpsed the mind of my master and turned against him—it—and returned to the true calling of the bard.*

### The Mind of the Master

In my research concerning ghosts, I have recorded stories of unfortunates set upon by evil doers in the guise of friends, and of innocents fatally betrayed by loved ones who somehow, by sheer force of will, reanimated their mortal shell to wreak vengeance on their murderers. While this type of reanimation is fueled by an outraged spirit determined to forestall its own death, the state itself is not one specifically sought by the revenant in such tales, and once its goal is fulfilled, it happily seeks the afterlife for which it was destined.

Mentalist lichs differ from such beings on several points: First, and most obviously, they have purposefully sought their undead state. Second, they do not end their unnatural life with the accomplishment of any goal; rather, their unlife is their goal, and it now serves them in the pursuit of further mental endeavors. Finally, they are masters of the mental disciplines, rather than unfortunates whose emotional state combined tragically with their force of will to enable them to gain a temporary semblance or extension of life.

While it is a tortuous and near-impossible thing to try and grasp the mind of a mentalist lich, it is not beyond mortal ken to understand the drives that led it to its undead state: knowledge, a drive for excellence, and power—the very same ambition that possesses all of its kind. More specifically, it would seem

that mentalist lichs share a burning desire to outstrip all others in their mental capabilities. They crave a discipline that will raise them above all others, even those of their own ilk. They passionately crave the self knowledge that they are the best, the supreme masters of the mind, that no other of their mental stature exists. Indeed, to survive they need the same power that allows them to pursue their studies beyond the laws of mortals, beyond the reach of human comprehension, and across the very planes of existence, life, and unlife.

Mentalist lichs are by their nature the most studious of their breed, and so they are the most reclusive. They commit their life spans of millennia to honing their disciplines beyond the aspirations of any mortal creature. Spending years in the refinement of one hair's-breadth, one tortuous point of logical control, one meditative discipline of mind over matter, is nothing more than a mere schoolbook exercise in penmanship to these masters of arcane will. In the end, they transcend the realm of human thought and enter a mental world which is beyond mortal understanding.

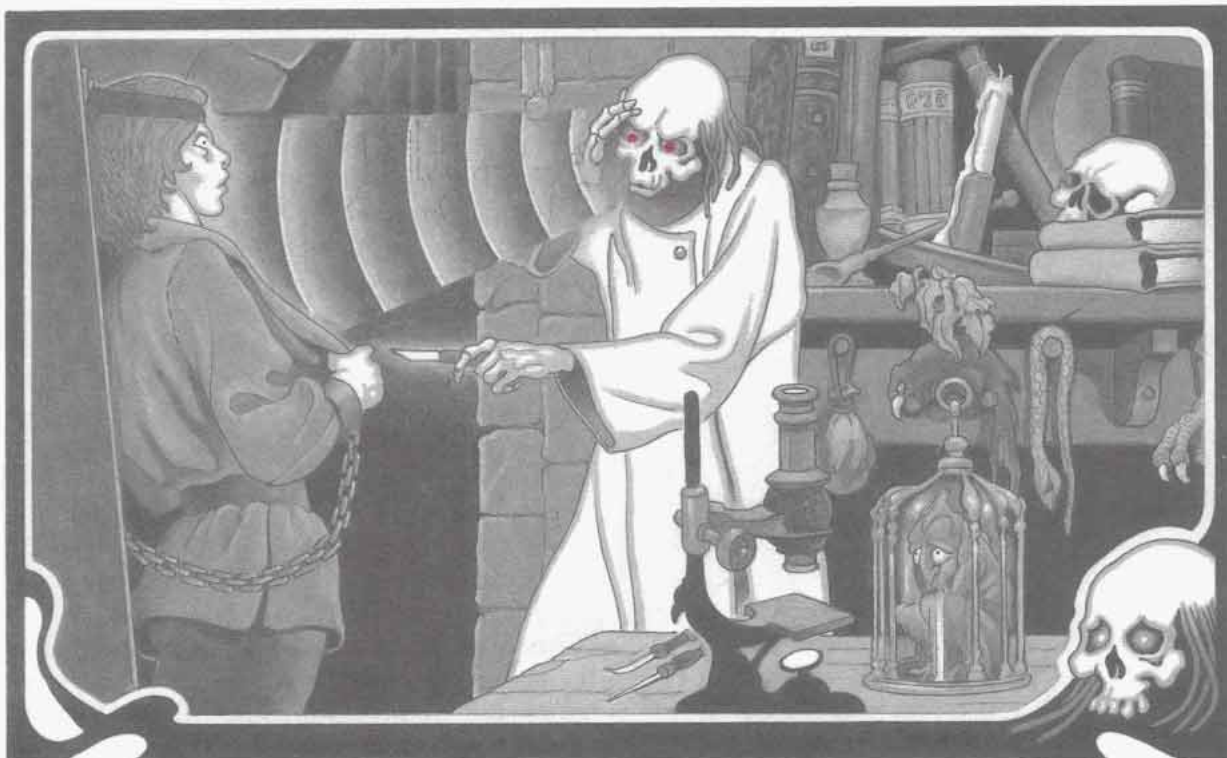
### Mentalist vs. Mystical Lich Auras

A striking difference between the mentalist and the mystical lich lies in the nature of their auras. The aura of cold darkness which commonly accompanies a common lich is absent in the creature of mesmeric power. Where other recountings speak of the intense cold of a lich's presence, the tales told by Swiftsinger speak only of a prickling of the skin, an undercurrent of power which was evident as he neared the foul beast, evident before the creature was even seen for perhaps twenty or more paces.

As he drew near to the lich, now completely revealed to Swiftsinger for what it was, a mental oppression came upon him such that he was unable to think clearly. Every action became an effort of extreme will, and he was convinced that some sort of power had seized his sword arm and made it strike poorly. A mage of some



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power who was in the group was reported to speak with extreme effort, as if spitting out words slowly into the breath of a hurricane.

This effect would seem to be some clouding of the mind which is caused by the aura of the mentalist lich. I surmise that it is an innate quality, ever present and requiring no effort or concentration to put into effect, just as is the aura of cold that enfolds a mystical lich. Whether or not this clouding has some special effect on those of exceptional mental or mesmeric ability, I am unable to say.

Even worse, this cloud of confusion can be directed by the dark thoughts of the mesmeric lich. A mental blow from this creature causes not only physical damage, but a psychic repercussion that feels as if it tears away at the very mind and spirit of a being. Swiftsinger described it, saying, "It was as if the icy fingers of death had picked at the ravelled edges of my

mind and then *yanked* loose a handful of the threads of my life."

Other powers that mentalist liches manifest are difficult to discern. Swiftsinger's tale speaks of people set upon by their own shadows, or who were forced to fight hordes of imaginary spiders or snakes or wolves (in each case, the creature feared most by the victim), or who were battered by mental waves of hatred and terror until they crouched as gibbering fools, drooling upon the ground. He also speaks of mighty warriors forced to commit the most horrific of acts in their own minds, and forced to feel themselves *enjoying* their foul deeds, and then released to pangs of remorse and confusion. Truly, the ability of the mentalist lich to climb inside an individual's own mind, elicit that which most horrifies him, and then torment him with it, is the mentalist lich's most insidious and vile capability of all.



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### The Lair of a Mentalist Lich

**A**s a devotee of cognitive pursuits, the mentalist lich rarely needs to leave its lair—it can conduct experiments within its own mind. Even when it does venture forth, I speculate that it does so through its mental devotions, transporting it self through a refined exertion of mind over matter. These peculiar abilities and exceptional reclusive tendencies make the discovery of its lair an arduous task.

But there are logical places to search. As usual, the lair would most likely be secluded and untraveled by mortals. Also, such a lair would be relatively close to a repository of knowledge, such as an ancient and well-established library or a college of mesmeric discipline, as the lure of accumulated knowledge and wisdom would prove a siren call to a being devoted to perfecting its mind. A third area type to which the lich would be drawn is any site of mass carnage. Like lichs of mystical derivation, mentalist lichs seem to feel an affinity for places imbued with the psychic resonances of death. Places with a history of great tragedy—huge battlefields, castles buried by landslides and volcanic eruptions, colleges swamped by tidal waves so that they are drowned beneath the seas—these are the places that call out, in a perverse way, with a kindred spirit to the mentalist lich. Perhaps such a lich feels kinship to the many wispy echoes of mental agony left from the tragedy. Or, in a revelation of its momentous ego and hubris, perhaps it equates the massive human tragedies embodied by such places with its own tragic transformation.

The juxtaposition of these three requisites can sometimes create a nexus wherein the lich's lair may be pinpointed. Such is the place for the hunter to begin his tracking. Of course, many of the devices and strategies used by the more common lich to protect its lair are also undoubtedly employed by mentalist lichs. As always, an abundance of lethal tricks and traps remains the surest sign that you are getting close to the lair of a lich.

### Servants of the Mentalist

**W**hile a lich of the more common arcane derivation primarily uses undead as its minions, the mentalist lich is more likely to draw upon living persons for help. I base this hypothesis upon the assumption that sentient creatures are of much more use to a mentalist than mindless undead. I doubt that most servants of a mentalist lich truly know what they serve, for surely their sharp minds are muddled by their still-sharper master's will.

From Swiftsinger's accounts and what little I have gleaned from other texts and stories of travelers from afar, mortals who are possessed of the rare talents of the mind and who wish to develop them are often at a loss to find a teacher under whom to study. True masters of the mental arts are so few and far between that even those of good heart may be tempted to study at the feet of one of such evil as the mesmeric lich. Such a creature would be the ultimate sage, as it has manifestly looked beyond the pale, far beyond what any mortal mind could experience and, perhaps, grasp.

Such lichs may use their powers to cloud men's minds, to make themselves appear as normal mortals of wisdom. They would then attract students to perform quests in distant lands, labor as experimental guinea pigs, and serve as guards and soldiers. It would not be beyond a mentalist lich to set itself up as the head of a mystic cult to a nonexistent deity, or to masquerade as a minor god itself, to gain followers of use to it.

Unfortunately for students ambitious and gifted enough to study with a mentalist lich, the master is as likely to fatally entangle them in its web of subtle and devious plots as it is to impart to them the knowledge they so passionately seek. Furthermore, once a servant has served his master's purposes, he might well find himself serving one last, less profitable service—I shudder to guess at what awaits even the most faithful servant of the faithless lich when his usefulness is exhausted. For the lich, dismissing a loyal student who successfully



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completed many arduous quests would carry all the pangs of saying "farewell" to Lord Azalin's tax collector, yet that student would be extraordinarily fortunate if a dismissal were all he got for his troubles. And woe to any student who displeases or annoys the lich! Killing a student who failed the least task or who dared to remain beyond his welcome would equate in the monster's mind to squashing a roach in one's kitchen.

The point of this discussion is that the path of a mentalist human is probably the clearest path to a lich of the same bent. Those who devote their lives to pursuing the powers of the mind are few and far between. Even if the student fails to learn the true nature of his master and repudiate it, (unlike the bard Swiftsinger), a resourceful lich hunter may follow the cerebral river to its source and then choke off the flow once and for all. On the other hand, followers of a powerful mesmeric master would certainly be extremely intelligent. Whether or not they might be used as instruments of betrayal is questionable at best.

### The Face of the Master

**T**he appearance and abilities of the mentalist lich are difficult to detail, as I have only the journal of Matthew Swiftsinger and some bits of rumor upon which to base my conclusions. I must speak in generalities, and the wise reader must be wary of my speculations.

According to the account of Swiftsinger, the mentalist lich shares a superficial physical similarity with the lich of arcane origin. The flesh is shriveled upon the bones, giving the creature the appearance of a corpse dried by a desert wind. The eyes have disappeared from their sockets, or been transformed, and twin points of crimson illuminate the spaces.

These creatures seem to prefer loose robes of colorful design, but they do not maintain their garments, except perhaps by illusory means. Thus, their finery is tattered and worn when their true form is at last viewed.

As may be expected, the mentalist lich is inclined to collect magical items with which to defend itself and enhance its powers, rather than make them. Even in the guise of an illusion, the presence of curious baubles and intricate jewelry may give away the lich.

By "mesmeric disciplines, hypnotic powers of will, and mental powers," Dr. Van Richten means, of course, *psionics*. Two types of lichs may have psionic abilities in Ravenloft: lichs of mystical origin who had psionic wild talents while they were alive (and who retain their psionic abilities when they become undead), and psionicists who have managed to achieve lichdom—not mystically, but through a very specific psionic process.

The details of this process, and all necessary information regarding psionic lichs, can be found on pages 95-96 of this book.

### Psionics in Ravenloft

The psionic disciplines of lichs are changed in the atmosphere of the RAVENLOFT® campaign setting to reflect the changes the demiplane of dread has upon all psionic powers. The effects upon psionics are consistent with those upon magic. Roughly, they are changed to reflect the following principles:

- Anything summoned or otherwise transported from another plane into Ravenloft cannot go back automatically.
- Divination abilities, spells, and powers are weaker in Ravenloft, favoring the secret ways of evil. Good and evil cannot be detected by spells and other powers, although law and chaos can be divined.
- Powers, spells, and magical items that are wholly evil or can be used only for evil purposes require a Ravenloft powers check each time they are used. This applies to most necromantic and life-energy draining powers.
- Those spells, powers, and items that create or assist the living dead or similar necromantic spells may actually work better in Ravenloft.



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Many sciences and devotions have specific changes which will not be detailed here. DMs are strongly encouraged to consult the "Dark Recesses of the Mind" book in the *Forbidden Lore* boxed set for a complete discussion of psionics in the RAVENLOFT® campaign setting.

In addition, it should be noted that the undead horrors of Ravenloft can put up a shield of false thoughts indistinguishable from the real thing, even with ESP or similar powers. The undead creature must consciously choose to do this, but it does not cost the creature an action to do so. It can choose to portray any emotion or thought, even love or friendship, although it finds these distasteful. The undead are immune to any mind-control or mind-altering ability while in Ravenloft. This means that most telepathic disciplines are useless against them.

Psionic strength points (PSPs) are regained by player characters at a much slower rate in Ravenloft, due to its oppressive nature:

Activity	Recovery Rate
Hard exertion, fighting	None
Walking, riding	1 per 2 hours
Sitting, reading	1 per hour
Rejuvenating*, sleeping	2 per hour

\* Rejuvenating is a psionic nonweapon proficiency.

Finally, those bold psionics who make mental contact with the undead (in any of a number of ways, but most commonly with an attempt to use a telepathic science or devotion), may be forced, at the DM's option, to make a *madness check*. This check is a saving throw vs. paralyzation to which Wisdom bonuses for saves vs. mental effects apply. If the check is failed, the psionic person making the check can become insane. The madness check and its consequences are discussed at length in the section on "Madness" in the "Dark Recesses of the Mind" book of the *Forbidden Lore* boxed set.





## IX: THE PRIESTLY LICH



*an doth not yield himself to the angels, nor unto death utterly, save only through the weakness of his feeble will.*

—Joseph Glanvill

*When I last prayed to my god, I saw that She was sad beyond words. She had witnessed the mournful transformation of one of Her priests into an undead form—a lich.*

*The priest had abandoned all that he had learned and forsaken his god's blessings to suck from the rotten fruit of evil power.*

*I do not know what has happened to that priest, other than he is doomed to suffer eternally for the betrayal and for giving his spirit over to a malignancy which serves only to curse this world by its very existence.*

—From a conversation with Tregarde of the Misty Dales

While mages are considered the most likely candidates to fall prey to the lure of lichdom, it should not be forgotten that the road to unlife may be walked by priests as well. In most respects the processes are similar. The priest also must discover the ritual, whether it is revealed by beings from elsewhere, unearthed from some ancient scripture where it lies in riddle, or unveiled by his deity in prayer. The priest also must manufacture a phylactery and concoct a poisonous potion to go with it.

However, the transformation for a priest is based in priestly magic, priestly ritual, and ceremony. A ritual designed for a mage would prove to be certain doom for a cleric.

Since a priest gains his magic through ritual contact with a deity, it is beyond belief that his deity would not know of such a profound change as the follower transforming into a lich. The very thought of being able to hide such a thing from a deity one serves so intimately is absurd. Therefore, it is almost universal that

any clerical lich is of a neutral or, more likely, evil bent, as the powers of good certainly will not tolerate such unnatural transformations among their followers.

In general, the clerical lich tends to be much rarer than the wizard lich. The introspection common to secular magical studies promotes a greater number of mortals to lichdom. Clerics tend to have certain duties that mandate their association with other mortals and which keep them more “human.” Service to another being, by its very nature, also inhibits turning to lichdom since it suppresses the pervasive self-absorption necessary to drive the aspirant.

### Goodly Priests and Their Deities

I cannot imagine what would cause a priest serving the cause of good, justice, and order to turn against everything he has devoted his life to preserving. Nor can I imagine what the wrath of his betrayed god would be.

During their research, priests sometimes encounter the secrets to lichdom. Perhaps these secrets are given to them surreptitiously by an evil deity, or perhaps they are revealed by the priest's own god as a test. Whatever the means, some priests come by the secret and elect to take full advantage of it for their own gains. They may justify their actions to themselves by saying that in this manner they will better or more powerfully or more everlastingly serve their deity, but these are mere rationalizations. The transformation to lichdom is always, at its heart, a selfish and ego-driven course of action.

For most, even acquiring the necessary components for the ritual—organs from slain, sentient beings and poisons of dire repute and illegal status—is enough to cause the priest to be banished from his church if he is discovered. And he surely shall be excommunicated when he undergoes the transformation ceremony, for then his deity certainly will *know* what has happened and inform other followers of his actions. When a priest is so banished, he loses



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all of the support of his religion. He can seek no lodging within lands or buildings owned or run by it, nor can he associate with priests of his former religion nor even other followers who know of his status.

Worse, the priest loses his ability to cast spells of healing, protection, and blessing, and he finds that the strength his deity gave him to confront the undead is taken from him. We people of common peasant stock can survive without the ability to turn undead away from us by presenting a holy symbol and without the ability to bless or heal or inspire the faithful to victory. But if a priest should lose these abilities, then it represents a collapse of the priest's very reason for being. He has turned his back on his life and jeopardized all of the society he was trained to protect and nurture. Who will be there now for the people he served, to heal their wounds of body and spirit and to turn away the undead?

The god who most likely influenced the person into becoming a priest, who at the very least welcomed the priest into his church, is not likely to embrace the priest's treachery. In fact, the deity is more likely to react with a terrible curse upon the fallen priest. So, clerics of good are, to my knowledge, unheard of among lichkind. Their deities have abandoned and cursed them, and to continue on they must have forged a pact with darker deities—at best, the disinterested and cold gods of pure knowledge, and at the worst the gods of evil and decay. In short, I must conclude that no priest of goodness can ever become a lich.

According to the *Monstrous Compendium*, lichs may be of any alignment. However, clerical lichs, as well as wizard lichs, are uniformly evil within the RAVENLOFT® campaign setting. The dark powers that guide the demiplane of dread select only evil lichs to bring to that place, and the native inhabitants of the demiplane who have the abilities, resources, and who escape the notice of the lord of their domain long enough to become lichs are nearly nonexistent.

### Neutral Priests and Their Deities

It seems reasonable to me that priests who espouse neither morality nor immorality, neither good nor evil, are the most likely to become clerical lichs. In the main, these priest serve gods of knowledge, who are often revered by mages. These deities promote an ethic of rising to one's own level of ability by one's own hand. This is the ethic which promotes aspirations to lichdom.

It might very well be in the interests of a neutral deity (for who am I to know the ways of gods?) to allow its servant to remain on this world long beyond the age of mortal men, in order to accumulate and relate knowledge and experience to him. While potions of youth might seem a logical resort in such a case, or brews that increase the normal span of man's life, these concoctions are known to be of questionable effect. They cause stress in the normal fabric of a person's physical being, stretching it back and forth like a piece of rubber, until one potion too many is consumed, and *snap*, the body disintegrates. One might rely on potions of longevity for a span of decades if one knew their mysteries (which I, alas, do not), but in due course the hand of death must close upon us all—or most of us, at any rate.

Therefore, it might, in the mind of some coldly calculating and inhuman god, seem an eminently logical and necessary next step to endow a faithful and trusted servant with the information needed to transform into a lich. The scrupulous performance of the research and processes necessary to complete the ritual of transformation, and the success or failure of the rite, would then prove the ultimate test of whether this servant was worthy of lichdom.

I find myself unable, no matter how broad of mind I attempt to be, to sympathize with the intentions of such gods. Mortals may not know the intentions of the divine, but how could a deity put one of its faithful through an experience guaranteed to warp its very mental being into something else? Surely such a god



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would know the unliving fruit of black knowledge is so perverse that a drift into evil is inevitable for its servant!

### Evil Priests and Their Deities

I have no doubt there are fiends who strive to find proper candidates for lichdom. And I doubt not their success. Evil religions have their own dark goals that are counter to the forces of light. To tip the balance, some evil deities surely attempt to find priests to turn into lichs, making them a much more powerful tool in some evil design.

I have known some servants of these dark gods—they are a paranoid and elitist lot, certainly a mortal reflection of the thing they worship. To earn the “gift” of lichdom (as I am sure they regard it), there are surely many trials of which only the priests themselves are aware. These tests must be extremely difficult, or I fear the world would be quite overrun with priestly lichs; such a station is highly prized by all creatures of evil bent.

Having some understanding of the hearts and minds of evil, I speculate that the tests of lichdom are particularly strenuous because the transformation into lichdom represents an increase in power so significant that the deity may have difficulty maintaining control over the lich. This simple conclusion explains rather well why evil clerical lichs fall into two types: those fanatically serving their deity and those attempting to become one.

The fanatics are extremely rare (I know of only one in existence), but they actually are the most open about their condition as lichs, at least with the followers of their god (my knowledge was gained through, shall we say, *eavesdropping*). They are the high priests or priestesses of deities of death or disease. They preside over unspeakable and foul rites in huge temple complexes, protected and served by legions of fanatic followers. Their deities reward their devotion with ever larger insights into the mysteries of magic, faith, and the energies of that plane of negative energy. They

are valuable generals in the ongoing battle between evil and good over the hearts and spirits of mortals, and their gods reward their loyalty with bounteous prosperity, ample knowledge, and often miraculous powers beyond those of even the common lich.

Clerical lichs are more likely to have salient abilities than wizard lichs. These may be abilities granted them by their deity (and thus are removable by their deity), or they may be manifestations of a difference or improvement in the nature of the ritual of transformation that invests them with lichdom. These special abilities may be the same ones discussed under “Salient Abilities,” in Chapter II, or they may be powers more in line with the specific deity to whom the clerical lich owes allegiance. These special abilities often show more of a subtle, interactive, charm-and illusion-oriented bent than those of the wizard lich (which tends to rely more on brute force), again emphasizing the more social nature of the cleric from which the lich springs. For instance, a clerical lich might have a *whisper of suggestion* ability rather than the *voice of maleficence* ability, which can be used on anyone at any time, working like the *suggestion* spell, but with a +2 to the target’s saving throw. The lich could use this ability up to six times a day, and its *suggestions* could indeed include harmful acts, but the target would then be entitled to a saving throw at a +2 bonus.

Those evil lichs attempting to become deities are often superficially identical to the fanatics. But they gradually subvert their god’s followers’ devotion, first portraying themselves as mouthpieces and then actual personifications of the god’s power and desires. They walk a thin and twisted line of duplicity, hoping to amass enough of a following (and enough magical items, artifacts of power, and abilities) to promote themselves to the status of a deity without their own god divining their ultimate intent too soon and squashing them like the two-faced insects they are.



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### Psychological Impacts of the Change

A person has to possess a spirit at least tainted, if not twisted, by evil to want to become a lich. The realization of the goal is an even more twisted event.

Some of the ingredients in the potion of transformation are exotic and fatal poisons of mind-boggling strength. When drunk, these ingredients do more than alter the body—they alter the mind extensively as well.

Although I certainly have no direct evidence to support it, I can say that a lich has a mind—a whole psychology—that is all its own. The mind of the priest is swept away, shriveled by the potion and shattered by the rites. A cleric is a person of faith—faith in himself, faith in his deity, faith in the steadfast workings of the universe. The change into a lich is a profound leap of faith in a direction that goes against the grain of the very constants of the universe in which the cleric has faith: birth, life, death, and afterlife.

The mind of the being that exists after the transformation is profoundly *not* the mind of the being that existed before because it has taken it upon itself, in even this small way, to defy the natural ordering of the gods with respect to itself. The clerical lich has set itself above its god in the matter of the avoidance of its death, and the fact that it finds itself still in existence after the transformation, after having the temerity to defy the universal order, subtly but absolutely shifts the underpinnings of its mind. In the priest's place is a wholly different being, one composed of a seething evil and pride. The personality of the formerly living person grows fainter and fainter through the centuries, eventually fading beyond the lich's own memory. All of the knowledge and skills of the person yet reside within the skull of the lich, and perhaps even the same goals as well. But driving the lich toward its goals is a lurking evil so black that it defies mortal experience.

The greatest loss in the transformation is the

fact that the living person's personality, his very *spirit*, is forever gone—irrevocably erased then remade in the image of the dominating power that is the lich. This loss is what makes deities of good abhor the transformation and deities of evil cautious as to its use.

The clerical lich worships and receives spells from a deity, just as it did in life, but many deities will reject a cleric for seeking lichdom or destroy him out of hand. Clerical liches therefore serve deities devoted to raw knowledge, like Azuth or Mystra of the FORGOTTEN REALMS® campaign setting, or Thoth, the god of knowledge in the Egyptian pantheon, or Math Mathonwy of the Celtic pantheon; or they serve deities of death, decay, and/or evil, such as Set of the Egyptian pantheon, Hel of the Norse pantheon, Arawn of the Celtic pantheon, and Cyric and Beshaba of the FORGOTTEN REALMS campaign setting.

The clerical lich is created through the same process at the wizard lich, except that the spells it casts are obviously clerical versions. Common abilities of the clerical lich also match those of the mage lich, in that they have an icy, damaging touch, an aura of fear, certain spell immunities, and they can be hit only by enchanted weapons of +1 or better. Clerics who become liches lose the ability to turn undead. Rather, they may command undead as described in the *Player's Handbook* under "Evil Priests and the Undead," as well as making use of the other methods of dominating, controlling, and commanding undead described elsewhere in this book.





## X: THE DEMILICH



*hat is not dead which can eternal lie,  
And with strange eons even death  
may die.*

—H.P. Lovecraft

Throughout this guide, I have attempted to impart the sheer threat implicit in the existence of a lich. I do not believe that there is a more dangerous creature to be found in any realm or any plane of existence—except for one, and that is the subject of this chapter: the *demilich*. Here is a creature so evil, so powerful, that the lich would be little more than a quasimancer to it. In fact, the *demilich* is so nearly omnipotent that magic is more an old habit than a life's ambition!

I simply cannot fathom a mind so old and potent and surely warped as that of a *demilich*. In fact, I have never seen one, nor met anyone else who has. All that I have to argue that such a monster exists is a fragment of a legend recorded in the journal of Mirinalithiar. Its veracity is highly questionable, and I am quite disposed to ignore it, yet I cannot. If there is even the remotest possibility that such an abomination exists, then we must take steps to learn about it. We may never possess the power to destroy it, yet we may learn the best way to avoid it and its wrath.

Here are the pertinent passages from Mirinalithiar's diary:

*It is told that there came to be trapped within this land of the Mists a skull . . . a skull with precious stones for teeth, but nothing else to betoken any significance. From whence it came is lost in the dust of ageless time, and to whom it belonged no one can say.*

*In its resting place did the skull lie for time out of mind . . . and never did it stir until its resting place was disturbed.*

*Then came Androlinatar, greatest of all explorers, who found the resting place of the*

*skull with magic given to him by the gods themselves. With him came Elinver, greatest of all wizards, and Jazapan, greatest of all warriors, and Honik, holiest of all priests, and with them came their legion of faithful and valiant followers. As a mighty army they took the lands before them, and as a mighty army they came upon the resting place of the skull.*

*. . . and when they entered the resting place of the skull that had lain there for time out of mind, it immediately arose from the ground and spoke to them, saying, "I am Hero's Bane. I am invincible. I am demilich."*

*. . . and without warning the skull lashed out at Androlinatar and all his company of the mightiest men who ever lived, and it ripped their spirits from their breasts and changed them into priceless gems, and it wore them as its teeth, and they were powerless to stop it.*

*. . . the servants were instantly burned to ashes where they stood . . . excepting one who was sent hurtling from the mountain, that he might take warning to the world, and gnash his teeth, and despair, and die. . . .*

As the reader can see, the prospect of such a creature is not a pleasant one!

With no evidence to support the existence of this creature, I have consulted and speculated with numerous sages, mages, and priests. To my surprise, they have recounted similar legends to me, of monstrous powers within the confines of a disembodied skull, of gems that entrap the living spirit, of creatures who sail unfettered among the countless planes of the multiverse, absolutely disinterested in the affairs of any single world, let alone any single person! With the help of these scholars, I have written this chapter. The knowledge contained herein may be of little or no use to the reader (an encounter with a *demilich* is as hopeless an exercise as a person may attempt!), but if knowledge is power, then the reader is always wise to gather as much knowledge as possible.



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### Origins

**M**y best guess at the origin of the demilich is that it is an undead wizard who has lived so long, learned so much, and gathered such power that it has literally achieved a new level of existence. The creature's definition of power, itself, has evolved entirely beyond the grasp of the mortal mind, and so the demilich has abandoned all mortal exploits to survey realms in which only the gods tread. Having no interest in the world that gave it form, the demilich surrenders that form, and its body crumbles to useless dust. All that remains is a skull.

By the time its body falls into ruin, the lich has learned virtually all the arcane secrets of its world—all things that both should and should never have been discovered at all. It has had millennia to reflect upon its evil and the nature of power, and it has mused upon that which even the blackest hearts would call vile.

Perhaps the new demilich abandons its grasp

of the concepts of Good and Evil as we know them. Perhaps Good and Evil do not even exist in its new understanding. The creature may now seek knowledge that, in the grand scope of things, is entirely neutral—mortal emotions and perspectives are trivial, petty, not worth consideration. Mayhap the demilich joins the deities themselves, to dance through the ether, enjoying whatever inconceivable lives they have. Or demiliches may become the very heart and soul of evil, influencing others to follow in their paths and spread destruction throughout the realms of the living.

Of any of these things, I can never be certain. All I can do is contemplate what they must be like, and, ironically, hope that I never learn the answers to my own questions! It occurs to me that I am waxing exceedingly esoteric, which I hoped to avoid. But when one is faced with a creature as incomprehensible as the demilich, somewhat bizarre and philosophical jargon is frequently all that one can manage. I only hope that my meanderings will be of any help at all.





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### The Transformation

In this evil world, there is much opportunity for the lich to exist for quite a long time indeed. The land of the Mists seems to be all too closely connected to darker energies upon which the lich feeds for its survival. Indeed, the lich is able to channel this dark energy through its body and spirit for centuries upon centuries.

Whatever the duration of its life in this physical world, it seems that the unchecked lich is destined to undergo a gradual transformation. This change is a subtle one that requires little specific effort from the lich. Most of my consultants agree the conversion must occur naturally; there can be no way for any creature, living or dead, to purposefully pursue such a course—the gods, themselves, would surely intercede. Rather, I suspect that the lich becomes more engrossed in its studies and meditations over time, until it has no care for matters in the physical world at all. In fact, it would not be surprising if a lich were to relocate to a place where it might never be disturbed by anyone from the physical realm.

In this case, it is reasonable to assume that the lich would begin to neglect the maintenance of its own body, working instead to greater efforts in absolutely pure research and meditation. As the undead wizard delves deeper and deeper into the theoretical, the theoretical becomes more and more substantive while substance becomes increasingly theoretical.

After a time, our perspective of established fact would become pointless to a lich, even a nuisance, and the lich would have no more reason to consult its extensive collection of tomes that deal with the manipulation of this physical world. Perhaps all the information in the gigantic library shrinks in the budding demilich's vast consciousness, until the entire accumulation fits into a tiny, rarely visited corner of its incredible mind!

I have an image in my mind, of a lich upon a throne of bone—bone of enemies it crushed when it entertained concerns over the material

realm of men and monsters. Without rest or sustenance, the lich thinks upon unknown subjects every moment of every day—days that do not exist as it sits upon that throne without an audience. It has long forgotten the undead servitors it once commanded, long forgotten the evil projects it initiated with the labor of their skeletal backs, long abandoned exploits that rocked the mortal world to its foundations.

Now it merely sits and contemplates who-knows-what, of ethereal regions beyond the physical realm, of spaces beyond even that. Its once-powerful alchemical solutions have dried and fallen into powdery neglect. Even magical items that would conquer a world have lost their luster, and they sit in chests of which the lich cannot be bothered to remember the location. The wood of its benches, the paper of its tomes, all things consumable by age have disappeared in the face of eternity.

Ultimately, all that remains of the lich slowly and inexorably decomposes beyond recovery. All that remains of the dreaded lich is that object which will probably last forever: its skull. The former receptacle of that formidable mind finally comes to rest atop a mound of dust that was once its body. Perhaps it will sink into the seat of the throne upon which it once sat.

Again, I have an image in my mind, of a skull lying in a pillow of dust, its empty sockets devoid of even the dimmest hint of a reddish glow where once there was a blaze of unconquerable evil. . . .

When a lich attains demilich status, it abandons all attempts to reconstitute its body, choosing rather to explore the outer planes (except those within Ravenloft, who are limited to the border ethereal). Therefore, its body breaks down and eventually dissolves into a skull, a few bones, and a pile of dust.

Its has the ability to re-form its body at any time, but most demiliches clearly feel no inclination to do so. Indeed, a demilich in need of a physical body could conjure a healthy one out of thin air or, more likely, simply commandeer the body of any bystander.



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### Final Analysis

By the time a lich allows its body to fall into dust, it has learned all it can of its physical world, or at least as much as it needs to; there simply is nothing else to concern it *within the realm of mortals*. Hence, it becomes an incorporeal entity, free to travel to places of which we can only imagine. Perhaps the lich perceives the very forces that comprise and drive the world and begins to drive them itself.

What fate awaits on the other side of physical reality? Does a demilich become a part of the evil that surrounds us? Is it absorbed by a greater evil that has throughout the millennia plotted for demiliches to come into being, so it may snatch their life energies and satisfy its own grand master plan? Does evil even have a meaning to the once-mortal wizard anymore? I'm afraid that we will never know. Perhaps demilichdom is merely another step in an infinite line of lives. Mayhap becoming a lich is but the *first of many steps* toward some

unknown state of transcendence. Whatever the end result, whether or not pure immortality is achieved, the price is centuries of pain, torture, and an evil scourge upon a land of innocents. And, of course, the ultimate price is the cost of their personal spirit. Once transformed into the body of a lich, a being can never experience the simple joys of living. Nor can it enjoy the afterlife we achieve through our gods. In a very real sense, the lich lives forever, yet it has nothing to live for.

Still, there is one happy conclusion to be gleaned from all this supposition: the demilich has no interest or use for the world as we know it. Wherever it has gone, there seems to be no reason for it to return, unless it be to defend the place where its mortal remains sleep away the eons. So long as we mortals do not disturb its rest, I think it safe to say that the demilich will return the favor. And if by some great accident the reader should come upon the remains of a demilich, then *nothing* can help him anyway.



## X: THE DEMILICH

Dr. Van Richten hopes that the demilich has no affect upon the Prime Material plane, but when the lich has passed on to another stage of existence, its will may be yet felt in the physical world. Perhaps it may embark on a large-scale conquest in an attempt to drain an entire realm or world of its life essence, and player characters may come into play as pawns in a cosmic chess game. Or the demilich may attempt to cross swords with the gods, themselves! Whatever the case, an adventure directly involving a demilich will call for extremely high-level characters and maybe even an avatar or two.

Since Ravenloft is effectively sequestered from the rest of the multiverse, a demilich cannot penetrate any plane beyond the border Ethereal. On the other hand, they may be the *only* creatures who can actually escape the demiplane of dread of their own volition. In any event, the DM is strongly urged to exercise great care in the use of demiliches. They are rare to the verge of being unique, and they should not be portrayed as characters who galavant across the cosmos, playing havoc with the laws of the gods.

The final resting place of a demilich will be so obscure that the greatest of adventuring parties could find it only by the most incredible of coincidences. Even so, the demilich will not make a great effort to secure its remains because it simply has no reason to do so. When the time has come to enter demilich status, its undead body is an irrelevance.

General information regarding the demilich can be found in the *Monstrous Compendium*, within the "Lich" entry. It will be especially necessary for the DM to tailor the demilich's abilities to the needs of his or her campaign, more so than for virtually any other monster. The demilich is as close to godlike in status as a monster can be, so its powers must be unique and specialized.

The following information provides some guidelines for additional powers that may be accorded to the demilich.

### Possible Powers

The demilich can be afforded the ability to perform actions that affect the Prime Material plane on a large scale. Even though it is a disembodied life form caught between the Negative Material, the Ethereal, and the Astral planes, the demilich can affect the Prime Material plane by directing energies from those planes it inhabits. This should be achieved only when conditions on the Prime Material are perfect; for example, during an eclipse or the passing of a comet, or any other exceedingly rare occurrence. At such a time, the gateways between the planes are at their weakest and the spirit of the demilich is at its strongest, as the demilich is then able to draw from both sides.

The physical manifestation of a demilich should not be within the scope of adventuring parties to combat. The only way to defeat a demilich is to stumble upon its remains and destroy them in the manner described in the *Monstrous Compendium*. Rather, these powers should be used indirectly, perhaps to begin and/or end grand campaigns with an event of cosmic import or travesty. Here are some suggestions for demilich powers:

- The demilich can inhabit and control 100 undead creatures of any type at once, maintaining both the creatures' innate abilities and endowing them with full sentience and lich powers. A legion of liches with a single consciousness can decimate entire armies!
- The lich is able to locate and communicate telepathically with any evil-aligned creature or person at will. The subject of the demilich's contact cannot ignore or resist the demilich, but must listen to and obey every command. Range and number of possibly controlled individuals is up to the DM.
- The lich is able to wreak havoc upon a 100-mile radius area with earthquakes, fire storms, and other catastrophic occurrences, killing all or almost all living things therein.



## CONCLUSION



f all the terrible monsters I have hunted, the lich has been the most elusive. Its only association with mortals lies in the acquisition of the arcana that all wizards crave. The lich is like a gourmet who feasts upon the magic of the world. When it has what it wants, it abandons the company of civilization and

withdraws to candle-lit chambers in unknown recesses, to digest what it has taken in. Unfortunately, its appetite is insatiable.

Because of their secretive ways, I have had more difficulty unearthing solid information

about liches than any other creature of the night. Only Harmon Ruscheider has observed the lich at length and lived to tell the story, and only because the lich—whose name he never learned—accidentally destroyed itself in a power ritual. As the reader may remember, Dr. Ruscheider went mad and died with the knowledge he was given. Although I crave that knowledge I realize ignorance is, indeed, bliss.

But ignorance also is a hypnotic state that desensitizes one to impending doom, and I must *never* surrender to it. If the observations I made in my introduction to this subject are true, then my own, beloved Darkon is ruled by a lich—one who cares all too little for privacy! In writing this treatise, I have put my life in more jeopardy than a warrior who goes to battle without arms or armor.

So be it. May this and all my dissertations upon the cursed monsters of this world far outlive me. If even one phylactery is smashed to a thousand shards because of the ink I have shed, then the score will be more than even!







*If such great powers or beings there may be conceivably a survival . . . a survival of a hugely remote period when . . . consciousness was manifested, perhaps, in shapes and forms long since withdrawn before the tide of advancing humanity . . . forms of which poetry and legend alone have caught a flying memory and called them gods, monsters, mythical beings of all sorts and kinds. . . .*

—Algernon Blackwood

It would be a shame to use the lich in nothing more than a simple search-and-destroy scenario. A villain as intelligent and evil as the lich should not simply hang around its (sort of) secret lair and wait for adventurers to flush it out and kill it.

Indeed, the lich is so complex in its abilities and what it has gone through to develop them that it very nearly demands to be role-played. This is not to suggest that the outcome of the adventure should be handed over to the dice. (Most DMs need no lectures about the role of dice in the game!) Rather, an NPC that must accomplish its goals through the process of adventuring can lend an element of excitement to the game for *both* the DM and the players. The DM can develop open-ended scenarios where virtually anything can happen, depending upon the interplay between PCs and NPCs. The players, unable to step back from the gaming table and say, "The end of this adventure was written before we even began it," will be thrilled at the prospect of holding more of their destiny in their own hands.

Therefore, it is strongly recommended that the DM seek to generate a lich with a specific personality and goals, but to place it into an adventure with several obstacles to overcome, other than the PCs. Of course the lich has a major objective, but it should have other concerns as well—concerns that smart PCs will

perceive and use in what should be a battle of wits as much as a battle of swords and spells.

This chapter can help the DM manage the lich in adventures. In the end, it should be possible to present a force of evil and deception so clever, challenging, engaging, and fun that the lich scenario will not be forgotten.

## The Master Planner

**T**his scenario is popular in spy-thrillers, where the hero(es) must piece together the plans of the adversary before thwarting him.

The master-planning villain hopes to achieve a specific and grand objective, but he does so by layering his intentions within a host of minor crimes designed to throw heroes off the scent. For example, a lich might launch a barrage of attacks upon a large library, only to steal an artifact on the other side of town. The PCs easily fend off the attacks (perhaps too easily), but they remain occupied with the defense of the library while the lich penetrates the superior defenses of the museum where the artifact lies.

Continuing with this example, the PCs should know about the artifact, including the fact that it is well protected, but they will be constantly accosted and cajoled by the librarian and other officials who insist that some volume of questionable value must be guarded like the crown jewels. Other clues might be sprinkled in liberally to subtly suggest that more goes on than meets the eye.

The DM's objective is to keep the PCs off balance, to divide their priorities, and to keep them guessing at the lich's true objectives. Remember: a villain who successfully decoys the PCs away from his true objective will gain their respect and lasting enmity, and he will provide an extended adventure for all to enjoy.

## The Mysterious Stranger

**T**his scenario is common to murder mysteries, providing the classic *whodunit* plot. The lich's penchant for secrecy and



its expertise in disguise provides excellent stuff for this kind of adventure. In this scenario, the PCs have no idea of what they are up against. There are multiple suspects, all up to something, and the lich is only one of them—the PCs don't know who the bad guy is.

The players should be initially unaware—completely unaware—that a lich is behind the troubles they are encountering. And once they discover that a lich is involved, they might well be led to think that some nasty person is the lich, either with or without the lich's help.

In this scenario, the lich will make extensive use of living and undead servants. Given that undead in Ravenloft are able to completely mask their thoughts (see the *Forbidden Lore* boxed set), the undead servants become especially effective in dealing with and deceiving players.

As the plan unfolds, the focus becomes the player characters' investigation of identities. Even at this point the players should still be unaware that a lich manipulates the plot. Just as the inhabitants of Ravenloft can live out their entire lives not knowing the true nature of their own ruler, so can the players go through almost all of the adventure blind to the *true* force behind their encounters.

## Recruiter of Evil

In this scenario, the lich attempts to raise an army of vassaliches (see Chapter VII). At first this seems to be a good thing—evil wizards are disappearing left and right, and the countryside has not been so peaceful in years. Then, good wizards begin to disappear, too.

In a related scenario, a powerful, apparently good-aligned wizard seeks to recruit the PC wizard(s) to join his ranks and purge the countryside of evil. In reality, the “good” wizard is a lich who is attempting to make a vassalich of the PC. The lich tempts the wizard PC with great power, perhaps even helping him or her—and the rest of the PCs—to overcome another evil being in the area. As the lich gains the trust and swells the ambition of the wizard character, it begins to subtly turn the PC

against his or her comrades. For example, the disguised lich may invite the PC to join in a short adventure that advances the cause of good, and then reward the PC with a powerful magical item. In game terms, the DM would find ways for the PC to gain experience and even levels independently of the rest of the group, thus separating the character from his comrades in an attractive way.

Remember, if a PC embraces vassalichdom, even ignorantly, then the character becomes an NPC. The trick is not to encourage evil behavior, but to tempt the PC with enormous power. This particular scenario will take time to play out effectively, to avoid undue suspicion on all the players' parts, but it also can be the most dramatic of adventures.

## War of the Superpowers

If the PCs are too weak to deal with a lich (as most should be), then the DM might create an adversary worthy of the lich and then use the PCs as pawns in an evil chess match between the two powerful adversaries. This scenario is not limited to a good vs. evil theme, either. Perhaps two liches vie for control of an item or artifact, or the lich and a vampire struggle for domination of one another. The PCs might find themselves in a position to switch sides repeatedly, as one monster and then the other gains the upper hand. Both evil creatures plan to kill the PCs once their ends have been served, but until then the player characters are valuable to both sides. If the PCs play their cards right, they may send both creatures to mutual destruction.

In all of the above suggested scenarios, the outcome of the adventure remains open to the influences of role-playing. When a monster of genius intelligence, like the lich, comes into play, the most realistic adventures will contain plots within plots within plots. A static lich in a trap-laden lair is just another monster, but a DM role-played lich makes the worthiest of foes.



## Techniques of Terror

In a lich-related adventure, mystery should be a cornerstone of the PCs' sense of fear; as knowledge is the characters' strength, ignorance is their weakness and an excellent avenue in which to inspire terror.

For example, consider an exploit in which one of the player characters is kidnapped by the lich (a variant of the "recruiter of evil" scenario). When the players question the locals, they discover that a nearby swamp is "haunted," and that homes around the swamp are cursed—many who have entered the area have disappeared. The swamp is avoided both day and night. This gives the players an obvious place to start.

The players will eventually realize that a lich is at work, but the DM should maintain a sense of foreboding mystery as long as possible. Perhaps the kidnapped character turns up with no memory of where he or she has been, only to disappear again without a trace; this can go on repeatedly until the PCs are beside themselves with apprehension. If subtle signs of bizarre experimentation show up on the kidnapped character's body, the alarm is again heightened. In other words, keep throwing small details at the players that defy explanation. If the mysteries involve one or more of the PCs directly, so much the better. False clues are good, but frightening enigmas, such as a tell-tale surgical scar below the left ear, are even better.

## Death of a Nonplayer Character

If players are made to feel that their characters' lives are genuinely at risk, then the game will be more interesting for everyone. The lich takes advantage of this basic aspect of human nature, which is why it has spells and abilities that are designed to make its lair appear as sinister and dangerous as it is. The DM should use this part of lich behavior to the fullest.

For example, walking into a cavern that is littered with the skeletons of fierce monsters

suggests that the inhabitant of the cave is particularly dangerous, and that the characters could very easily end up on the floor as well, for someone else to discover. The players will expect a particularly nasty threat to overcome, and will prepare themselves psychologically for its approach. They're ready to be thrilled.

Another excellent method of making PCs nervous is through the horrifying death of an NPC. To use this device, the DM should introduce a friendly character to the adventuring group and allow him or her to gain their trust and goodwill. Allow the NPC to save their lives once or twice, early in the adventure. Furthermore, allow the NPC to be at least as powerful as the strongest member of the group. This will subtly tell the players that they are tangling with mighty enemies (because the DM is giving them such a powerful "henchman"), thus raising the level of tension in the field, but it will also shock them when the NPC is suddenly, horribly killed before their eyes.

## Death of a Player Character

Every DM has at one time or another has wished to kill off someone's character. There are a variety of reasons for such a desire, few of which are valid in light of more mature ways of keeping the character or the player from the game. In the RAVENLOFT® campaign setting, it is ironically even more inappropriate. Adventures in Ravenloft are more essentially plot-driven than in other worlds, and the arbitrary death of any character detracts from the mood and setting.

On the other hand, there are times when the DM will want to put the imminent threat of death into the players' minds, and that cannot be achieved if the possibility dying is not genuine. Most players do not expect to be subjected to no-win situations, so an effective way to frighten them is to put them into a hopeless predicament and then play it out very slowly. Let them see they are going to die and let them watch it happen little by little. For example, take a PC prisoner, strap him to a



table with a descending blade over his throat, allow his comrades to search for him, and make it obvious that rescue will probably be a few minutes too late.

The lich serves as a good vehicle for introducing this kind of terror. The undead wizard revels in death, and it has virtually no concern over the lives of mortals. In addition, the lich has a wide variety of methods with which to kill, from innate abilities to spells to an arsenal of magical devices.

## General Mood and Surroundings

When the players first encounter a lich's lair, a deep sense of foreboding should be instilled in them. All things that are dark, sinister, depressing, black, and evil should be brought to the forefront of the senses. The key to evoking these feelings lies in the language of the DM when describing the setting.

For instance, if the lich is secluded within some ruins in the middle of a swamp, the following description might be employed:

*Despite the fact that it is close to midday, you must light your lamps and torches to see ahead. As you do, shadows reluctantly part to reveal the ruins you have been searching for.*

*The broken walls have been almost entirely hidden by all manner of twisted growths and choking vines. The once tall and gleaming stone pillars and beautiful gables are now dilapidated, mossy wrecks. The structure seems to have crumbled from within, collapsed from neglect and from centuries of unchecked vegetation that snaked its way into the cracks of the walls and rended them into rubble.*

*Here, within the ruins, the smells of the swamp have dissipated slightly, and in their place is a most unusual, stifling odor, like that of a crypt freshly opened. It is a dank, slightly rotten stench that breathes forth from no apparent source.*

*Is it the chill of the swamp that grips your stomach like the hand of a dead man, or is it the dread within the very walls of this great castle, completely in the grasp of the swamp?*

For all the PCs know, the ruins are completely empty and harmless. If the description is laced with verbs and adjectives which imply that the very surroundings are alive, the players may well assume that the walls might reach out and grab them. Every room can feel threatening, and every shadow can contain monsters made purely of the players' imaginations. The DM can repeatedly point out strange noises in the background that are actually harmless, even unrelated to the matters at hand, but the PCs' ignorance of the source will drive them crazy.

Even common objects can strike fear into player characters' hearts if described correctly. It is not enough for the DM to say "You see a chest against the west wall." In a horror adventure, the chest can be made threatening just by being there. Slight embellishments to common objects can make them eerie, and thus add to the atmosphere of the adventure. For instance, the DM might say:

*You see an oddly proportioned chest resting a few feet from the west wall. You have not seen such a chest before. It has an almost cubic shape to it, and it has gold hinges and fittings. There are multiple scratch marks all over its dark wooden surface—what made them is impossible to say. You can see the latch plainly, but there is no padlock attached to it. There is an odd chill in the room that might be coming from the chest—but you can't be sure.*

This raises all sorts of questions about the chest that have to be answered by the players' imaginations until they actually open it. While their imaginations are working, they will construct their own suspense. After a few narratives like this, the players will hesitate to pick up a rock from the ground, for fear of rousing the master evil villain from its lair.

DMs who want to learn more techniques of terror would do well to consult Chapter XV in the rules book of the RAVENLOFT® boxed set.





## Fear and Horror Checks

**S**ometimes, no matter how hard he or she tries, the DM simply can't evoke a sense of fear or horror in the players. While the DM attempts to establish the mood with a juicy bit of narrative, the players make jokes and laugh at the description (which, in fact, is a sign of fear).

This is the function of the fear and horror check: to force upon the player character those feelings that the player refuses to experience. These checks can be enormously debilitating, and the DM can impose penalties to dice rolls, to be sure that characters fail them. If the players refuse to role-play their characters or make light of every hair-raising sight they are introduced to, then the DM can tell them they will have to make these checks since they "obviously can't react properly to the situation."

After they fail a few of these checks and have to suffer the consequences, the players may change their minds about laughing in the face of death.

## The Lich in the Long Term

**I**t is possible for a group of adventurers to build their entire careers around defeating the plans of a single lich, as well as the monster itself. It also is possible for lower-level characters to defeat a lich without ever coming into direct contact with it. The plans that a lich puts into effect can be massive in scale, involving politics and diplomacy among nations, or they may be as modest as influencing the election of a village mayor. Players often can defeat a lich simply by defeating the minions who carry out its orders. This way, lower-level characters can tangle with a lich as can higher level ones, without facing certain death.

Of course, a lich defeated through its minions is still around to create more trouble for the characters, who will have to build up their strength and experience before they confront it directly. But the players should also be aware that, while they're developing their



abilities, so is the lich that they're hunting. . . .

If a long-reaching lich plot—one that will take many long nights of play and perhaps several character levels of adventuring to resolve—is desired, then the minions of the lich can change from adventure to adventure, always becoming more challenging, until the PCs are strong enough to face the lich itself. This assumes that the PCs don't know who the master planner is. They might go on for years, fighting diverse adversaries and going on long quests, only to discover in the end that they have been fighting representatives of the same enemy the whole time.

Imagine the players' startling revelation when they realize that a wizard they crossed and defeated when they were at the first or second level of experience has been behind *all* of their troubles. When they finally know the source of their woes and angrily vow to destroy him once and for all, they are again surprised to learn that he has since become a lich. Now they must fight their way through layer upon layer of defenses before they can finally settle the score. Such a campaign could last for years.

## Lich Magic

In the realm of Ravenloft, a lich may be able (at the DM's discretion) to cast necromantic spells with much greater efficiency than those in other realms—sometimes even beyond the efficiency that necromantic spells already exhibit in Ravenloft. A general rule of thumb might be that all necromantic spells have either double the effect or half the casting time when employed by a lich in Ravenloft. The DM should determine what the effects exactly are in each situation, as some effects cannot easily be doubled. Note that these doubling effects refer to all spells listed anywhere, including those listed in the RAVENLOFT® rules book.

The DM should always check the rules concerning spells cast in Ravenloft (see pages 42-51 of the RAVENLOFT rules book)—even if a demilich casts a spell, it is still subject to the effects of the demiplane of dread unless otherwise noted.

## Lich-Altered Spells

The following are variants of existing necromantic spells. For each spell listed, there is a corresponding spell listed in the *Player's Handbook*. The statistics for each spell, such as the casting time, components, duration, etc. remain the same unless otherwise noted. However, all spells should be considered a level higher than their common counterparts. Also, these spells were devised by liches, to be used by liches; they are inherently evil. Liches require particularly evil acts to attract the attention of the dark powers since they are already "part of the club," so to speak. Non-liches, on the other hand, are potential inductees. Therefore, any wizard who attempts to cast these spells will quite likely attract the attention of the evil land. Hence, non-liches who cast lich spells are subject to a Ravenloft powers check, perhaps with a 25% bonus to the chance of being noticed.

### Greater Detect Undead (2nd level)

With this spell, a lich is able to detect all undead within range. Range is equal to the lich's Intelligence score in miles. Detection is omnidirectional and the lich need not remain stationary.

This spell is not hindered by obstacles of any kind. Furthermore, undead are not entitled to a saving throw, enabling them to avoid detection.

### Improved Chill Touch (2nd level)

This spell improves upon the damage and effects of *chill touch*. The target must save vs. spell or suffer 1d10 points of damage and become paralyzed from the extraordinary pain and cold. The paralysis lasts in hours equal to the amount of damage caused. Victims who fail to successfully save also lose 2 points of Strength and Constitution, and a full day is required to regain a lost point of each attribute.

This spell will also destroy any undead creature that has less than 3 Hit Dice, but if the undead makes a successful saving throw vs. spell, there is no effect.



**Sinister Cantrip (2nd level)**

Cantrips normally are used to produce innocent parlor tricks. This spell is similarly harmless, in terms of physical effects, but it can be used to create a sinister trick or illusion that strikes fear or disturbs the psyche of those who see it.

*Sinister cantrip* is a favorite prank among vassaliches, testing their new form.

Some typical applications of this spell are an illusion of insects crawling out of prepared food, a nagging itch in an impossible-to-reach spot, an illusion of bleeding from the fingernails, and altering the pitch of a victim's voice to make it sound like growling.

**Skeletal Hand (3rd level)**

This spell is similar to the *spectral hand* spell, but the image of the hand is that of a skeleton instead of a ghostly one. The lich can cast touch spells of 4th level or less through the hand. In addition, the *skeletal hand* can deliver physical blows by making a normal attack. The lich receives a +4 bonus to its die roll, and a successful hit inflicts 1d10 points of damage.

The hand may be attacked, but it can be damaged only by weapons of magical enchantment. Any damage ends the spell and inflicts 1d4 points of damage upon the caster. The hand can be kept at bay by a priest of good alignment by attempting to turn the hand as an undead creature with 2 Hit Dice.

The lich may move about while it controls the hand, but it may not make other attacks.

**Destroy Undead (4th level)**

A powerful variation of *hold undead*, *destroy undead* disintegrates undead creatures with Hit Dice equal to or less than the casting lich.

Undead that have less than 3 Hit Dice are automatically destroyed. Undead with 4 or more Hit Dice are allowed a saving throw vs. spell. If successful, the targets suffer 5d10 points of damage. If unsuccessful, they are destroyed. At the DM's discretion, vampires, mummies, and other high-level undead may be partially or completely unaffected by this spell.

**Feign Destruction (4th level)**

Similar to *feign death*, this powerful spell allows the lich to simulate its own destruction. When badly wounded, the lich may cast this spell.

Once done, the lich's body crumbles to dust, and detection spells or abilities will indicate that its spirit has returned to its phylactery. In reality, the lich's body has *teleported without error* to a secret location. At the same time, a pile of dust and bones has teleported from that same secret location, replacing the original.

Iron replicas of the lich's non-cloth possessions can be forged and placed on the dust-lich, to be teleported with it. The replicas bear only the shape of the items they replace, not the color. For example, a magical crown adorned with gems will be replaced with an iron one, the gems also made of iron.

The range of the spell, that is, the furthest distance that the lich can be from its mock body, is equal to the lich's Intelligence score times 1,000 feet.

**Lich Armor (4th level)**

This spell works as the *spirit armor* spell, with the following exceptions: Instead of a shimmering aura, the armor takes the form of a black shroud which mystically flows about the body of the lich. The armor offers the protection of plate mail (AC 3), and its protection is cumulative with the effects of other armor and magical devices. When it dispels, the lich suffers 2d6 points of damage instead of 2d3.

**Lich Touch (4th level)**

A step above *vampiric touch*, this spell inflicts 9d6 points of damage upon a successful attack. In addition, damage inflicted by this spell cannot be healed by spell magic or by a magical item, but normally or by magical potion only. Any added points over the lich's normal total are treated as temporary hit points that dissipate after one day.

In all other respects, this spell is the same as the *vampiric touch* spell.



**Mass Contagion (5th level)**

The effects are the same as the *contagion* spell's, except that it affects a mass of living persons within a 10-foot radius, instead of just one individual. The number of people who can be affected is equal to the lich's Hit Dice.

**Persona of Death (5th level)**

This spell is a variant of *mask of death*. This spell is generally cast in conjunction with *animate dead*. When cast, it not only makes a corpse appear to be person, but (if animated) he or she will sound and behave like (have the mannerisms of) that person, making an almost perfect duplicate. Of course, the lich must have a good idea of what the duplicated person sounds and acts like. The persona will be fairly superficial, but people who know the person being mimicked can be fooled. The corpse still has to be controlled, and it will not have any of the mimicked person's knowledge.

**New Spells****Corruption (2nd level)**

Range: 30 yards  
Components: V, S  
Duration: 2 rounds  
Casting Time: 1  
Area of Effect: 1 person  
Saving Throw: Negates

This spell inundates the target with an emotional flurry of corruption and greed. If the target fails a saving throw vs. spell, it temporarily succumbs to the temptations of dark power and becomes transfixed, lost among delusions of grandeur for the duration of the spell. After the spell expires, the target must roll another saving throw vs. spell or be predisposed to favoring the lich and what it stands for. If unsuccessful, the target will hesitate for one round if he or she attempts an offensive move against the lich or any of its minions or property. Until the victim succeeds his roll, the residual spell effect continues.

**Death Sight (3rd level)**

Range: 30 yards  
Components: S  
Duration: 5 rounds  
Casting Time: 1  
Area of Effect: 1 person  
Saving Throw: Negates

The victim of this spell sees everyone around him as a walking corpse. The victim must make a fear check on the first round of effect, and he must make a horror check at the beginning of each subsequent round of the spell's duration if he succeeds the fear check.

**Sleep of Horror (3rd level)**

Range: 30 yards  
Components: V, S, M  
Duration: Special  
Casting Time: 7  
Area of Effect: 1 person  
Saving Throw: Negates

The victim of this spell is wracked with nightmares during his or her sleep, completely disrupting any restful effects such as recovering spells, hit points, or PSPs. A *sleep* spell will negate the effects of this, as will a successful save vs. spell. The victim will have 1d10 nightmares during the night, and he must make a horror check after each nightmare.

The material component of this spell is a pinch of black sand.

**Stench of Death (3rd level)**

Range: 30 yards  
Components: V, S, M  
Duration: 1 hour  
Casting Time: 1 round  
Area of Effect: 50-foot radius  
Saving Throw: Negates

This spell fills the area of effect with a smell so foul as to cause complete disorientation among those caught within it. A successful save vs. paralyzation allows the character to remain within the stench, unaffected. Those who fail



their rolls will be overcome by the smell, double over, and remain unable to cast spells or fight. However, they may still flee the area of effect. Once outside of the stench, the victim requires a round of breathing fresh air before he can resume normal activities. As this effect is strictly magical, no wind will blow it away. It can, however, be *dispelled*.

The material component of this spell is a rotted body organ.

#### **Bone Form (4th level)**

Range: 3 yards

Components: V, S, M

Duration: 1–20 hours

Casting Time: 1 round

Area of Effect: Sufficient bones for the spell

Saving Throw: None

When this spell is cast, the lich is able to create any object less than 3 feet long, high, and deep out of bone matter. The lich must have a supply of bones on hand to create whatever object it desires. Weapons can be created with this spell; if done, such weapons are considered evil, but they offer no bonuses to attack rolls.

The material components of this spell are enough bones to construct the desired item and a drop of body fluid (spittle, blood, etc.)

#### **Bone Seize (4th level)**

Range: 60 yards

Components: V, S

Duration: 1–10 rounds

Casting Time: 3

Area of Effect: 1 person

Saving Throw: Negates

With this spell, the lich can take control of the victim's bones. It does not matter whether the target is alive or dead. Control is awkward at best: The lich can make the target walk, lay, and sit down only. It cannot make the target fight, cast spells, speak, jump, etc.

#### **Knoslira's Crypt (5th level)**

Range: 30 yards

Components: V, S

Duration: 1–10 days

Casting Time: 8

Area of Effect: 50-foot radius

Saving Throw: None

This spell causes any inhabited structure to become sealed as a crypt. In effect, all exits are *wizard locked*. Then the interior begins to darken over a period of five rounds. No light, even magical, can function in the darkness, nor can infravision. When the structure is dark, a horrible musty smell of death permeates the area, prompting fear and horror checks. Optionally, the DM may call for madness checks (see the *Forbidden Lore* boxed set).

#### **Sinister Surroundings (5th level)**

Range: 0

Components: V, S

Duration: 1 month/Hit Die of the lich

Casting Time: 2 rounds

Area of Effect: 1-mile radius/Hit Die of the lich

Saving Throw: None

This spell does not change the look of the affected area as would a *hallucinatory terrain* spell. Rather, it is used to create a grim and dismal feel around the lich's lair. Non-evil characters suffer a –1 penalty to fear and horror checks within the area of effect.

#### **Zone of Despair (5th level)**

Range: 0

Components: V, S

Duration: 1–6 hours

Casting Time: 8

Area of Effect: 100-foot radius

Saving Throw: Negates

Unless a saving throw vs. spell is successfully rolled, characters entering the area of effect become depressed and suffer –4 penalties to their initiative rolls. Any emotion-controlling spell, as well as *dispel magic* will negate the effect upon a character.



## Bones of the Earth (6th level)

Range: 10 yards

Components: V, S, M

Duration: 1d20 + 10 days

Casting Time: 3 rounds

Area of Effect: Special

Saving Throw: None

With this spell, the lich is able to create minor structures out of subterranean materials. When cast, a structure, not more than 20 feet high and 10 feet wide at the base per Hit Die of the lich, rises from the ground. The structure is simple and solid, and it can appear in any form the lich desires. It takes two rounds to form, and is always accompanied by extremely loud rumblings. The structure lasts for the duration of the spell, after which it recedes back into the ground.

Multiple structures can be created, but they are divided among the lich's total available mass. For example, an 11-HD lich could create one 220-foot tall structure, or eleven 20-foot tall structures.

The material components for this spell are a stone and a weed.

## Disrupt Dominion (8th level)

Range: 20 yards

Components: V, S

Duration: Permanent

Casting Time: 1 round

Area of Effect: Special

Saving Throw: Negates

By casting this spell, a lich attempts to take control of undead creatures from another commanding entity. The creature in control of the undead rolls a saving throw vs. spell. If successful, control of the undead is uninterrupted. If unsuccessful, the lich has clouded the undead with assorted negative energy patterns that disrupt control. The undead do not automatically become the lich's minions, but it is free to exert its will upon them and assume control in subsequent rounds.

## Ghoul Lattice (8th level)

Range: 0

Components: V, S, M

Duration: Permanent

Casting Time: 1 round

Area of Effect: 100 yards/Hit Die of the lich

Saving Throw: None

Stealing corpses from graveyards for raw materials can be a time consuming task without the use of this spell. Casting it creates a small tunnel that extends chaotically from the point where the spell was cast and then divides into a series of shafts, connecting with any number of graves or other subterranean pockets within the area of effect. The tunnels are 4 feet in diameter and circular, and they are situated an average of 6 feet below the surface. The tunnels intersect in a maze like fashion, but the only place where they emerge at the surface is at the point where the lich stands. (If the lich casts the spell underground, then the tunnels never reach the surface.) The spell creates a random latticework of tunnels through which the lich can summon new minions or harvest necromantic spell components.

The material components for this spell are a long fingernail and a pinch of dirt from a grave.

## Graft Flesh (8th level)

Range: 0

Components: V, S

Duration: Permanent

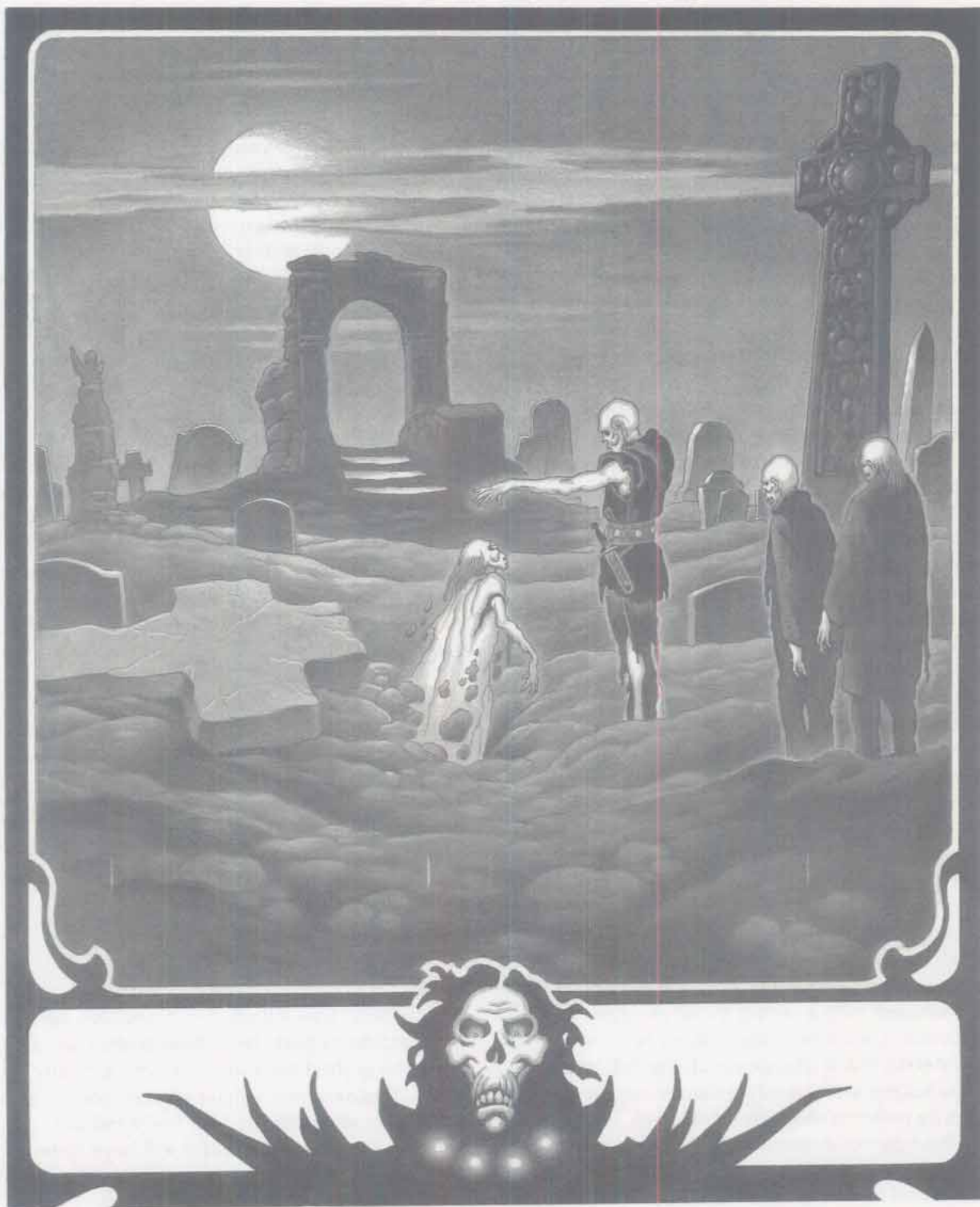
Casting Time: 1 round

Area of Effect: The lich

Saving Throw: Negates

Should a lich fall victim to a vorpal weapon or otherwise lose a limb, it can cast this spell and graft body parts from dead bodies on to its own; the grafted limb will function normally. At the DM's discretion, a lich can even graft additional appendages to its body and use them—obviously, its abilities will have to be specifically adjudicated. Also, the sight of such a creature will certainly evoke a horror check!







**Graft Item** (8th level)

Range: 0

Components: V, S

Duration: Permanent

Casting Time: 1 round

Area of Effect: The lich

Saving Throw: Negates

This spell is similar to the *graft flesh* spell, allowing the lich to graft any item, magical or otherwise, to its flesh. The attachment is instantaneous and permanent. There is no way to remove the object short of cutting it off.

**Simulate Skill** (8th level)

Range: 0

Components: V, S, M

Duration: 1d10 + 10 hours

Casting Time: 1 round

Area of Effect: The lich

Saving Throw: None

After casting this spell, the lich is able to use any weapon or nonweapon proficiency that a dead character possessed in life. The character cannot be more than twelve hours dead, and the lich must have witnessed him or her using the proficiency in order to know that it exists. The character is not deprived of the simulated ability, so a resurrected warrior whose skill with arms has been imitated will still have them.

The material components of this spell are a magnet and a piece of reflective glass.

**Wave of Death** (8th level)

Range: 0

Components: V, S, M

Duration: 2 rounds

Casting Time: 5 rounds

Area of Effect: 1-mile radius

Saving Throw: None

When a lich casts this dreadful spell, all vegetable matter within the area of effect withers and dies over a two-round period. The death is irreversible and unpreventable, and is quite a shocking event to behold, requiring a

horror check for all who see it. Druids and rangers make their checks with a -4 penalty.

The material components for this spell are a flower and a drop of poison.

**Confer** (9th level)

Range: Touch

Components: V, S, M

Duration: Special

Casting Time: 1 round

Area of Effect: 1 creature

Saving Throw: None

This spell is cast in conjunction with *create minion* for the purpose of creating a quasimancer (see Chapter VII). When the *confer* spell is cast upon the created minion, the undead creature's mind becomes attuned to spell memorization. The lich can then plant the spell repertoire of a 9th-level wizard (including number of spells and levels) within the minion's mind. The quasimancer can then cast the implanted spells at its discretion, as if it were the wizard who memorized them.

The lich must expend spell energy equal to the level of the spell placed in the quasimancer's head. In other words, to place a 5th-level spell in the quasimancer, the lich must expend the equivalent of a 5th-level spell from its daily allowance of carried magic. The quasimancer can receive spells from its master only once; when all of its spells are cast, it becomes a mindless undead.

Note that the quasimancer must have all spell components necessary to cast the spells implanted in its mind. This spell cannot be cast upon any other creature than one raised by a *create minion* spell. Casting it upon a living person will instantly cause insanity that can be cured only by *psychic surgery* or a *wish*.

The material components of this spell are the minion and a bit of brain tissue from a sentient being.



**Create Minion (9th level)**

Range: 10 feet

Components: V, S, M

Duration 1–20 days

Casting Time: 1 round

Area of Effect: 1 creature

Saving Throw: Special

This spell is used in conjunction with *confer* in order to create a quasimancer (see Chapter VII). When the lich casts *create minion*, a corporeal undead minion is animated and reinstated with a portion its former life essence, giving it artificial intelligence and spellcasting potential. In terms of physical traits, the minion becomes, in effect, a wight, having all the abilities and statistics of that creature (see the *Monstrous Compendium*). The newly created minion is entitled to a saving throw vs. spell (as a 5 HD creature) to avoid falling under control of the lich. If it succeeds, it will do its best to escape the lich and then go on a killing spree, resentful of the knowledge that its time of existence is limited. (Some created minions may attempt to find a wizard and force him to cast *permanency* upon them, thus negating the 1–20 day expiration of the spell.) A minion who fails its saving throw falls under complete control of the lich and can act as its master's agent in the field. Its intelligence allows it to command other undead in its master's name, and it remains susceptible to the *confer* spell.

Created minions under a lich's control make all saving throws at the level of their master; they are immune to *enfeeblement*, *polymorph*, *electricity*, *insanity*, *charm*, *sleep*, *cold*, and *death* spells; they exude a *fear* aura, 5-foot radius, requiring a successful save vs. spell or flee for 2d4 rounds.

Casting this spell upon a living person will require a successful save vs. death magic or the person immediately dies, becoming a created minion entitled to the saving throw detailed above.

The material components of this spell are the body to be raised and a bit of brain matter.

**New Magical Items**

Below are magic items that have been created in Ravenloft by liches. They are neither artifacts nor relics, as they can be created by any lich—in fact, any mage—who has the knowledge to do so. However, any mage who attempts to create one should make a Ravenloft powers check. None have any XP value.

**Torc of Craftsmanship**

This cursed ring cannot be removed by any means short of a *wish*, except by a lich. While the wearer lives, he receives a +2 bonus to saving throws vs. spells of the necromantic school. When the wearer dies, however, the ring automatically absorbs all of the nonweapon proficiencies the person possessed in life. When the ring is, in turn, worn by another person or by a lich, the skills it absorbed become available to the wearer. Only nonweapon proficiencies are available for absorption; spells and weapon proficiencies are excluded. However, the skill to read, write, and speak foreign languages and scrolls are absorbed and can be used by the wearer. (A conversation generally constitutes a use, as does reading a scroll or sign.) The ring cannot enhance a skill already possessed.

Central to the functioning of the ring is a ruby set in its center. Should the gem be taken from the ring, all of the skills are lost and the ring becomes nonfunctional.

The ring may be used to perform up to thirty functions. After the thirtieth task is performed, it becomes jewelry of 500 gp value. The ring cannot be recharged, but it can be put on a different victim, whose skills will be absorbed into the ring. The wearer has no method of knowing how many proficiency uses the ring contains unless a careful record is kept.

These *torcs* are quite commonly employed by liches when they have the opportunity to capture live people. Note that the *torc* does not deprive the living person of skills, but merely copies what is within the person.



### Crown of Summation

This ruby-studded circlet is similar in function to the *torc of craftsmanship*. Instead of capturing skills, however, the *crown* absorbs the wearer's memories. If the item is placed upon the head of a character within one hour of his death, all of the character's thoughts from the previous 1d6 days are transferred into the gems. The *crown* may then be placed upon another head, and all recorded events are played out in detail for the wearer.

Should a living person put on the *crown*, 1d4 levels of experience are drained into the rubies. They may be regained by removing the *crown* and putting it on again, but the levels are otherwise lost and cannot be regained by any means short of a *wish*. If another creature puts on the *crown* after levels have been drained into it, they merely experience the memories of the previous wearer as described above; they do *not* gain the lost levels of experience. Note that those absorbed levels also are lost if another person wears the *crown*—the drained character cannot regain his lost levels if another creature puts on the *crown* before he does so again.

The second wearer experiences the memories of the first as if he were actually living them. The *crown* transfers senses and emotions to the wearer. Physical occurrences are experienced, but their effects are not translated into actual effects on the wearer. However, psychological experiences are lasting. For example, if the memory contains a failed *horror* check, the wearer will experience the effects of it even after removing the *crown*. All actions are displayed at the rate of one day's memories per round. The *crown* functions only once, and then it becomes a piece of common jewelry worth 1,000 gp. It cannot be recharged.

A lich might typically use such a device to determine how an infiltrator came to find its lair, who his comrades are, and by what means he arrived. The *crown* also may be used to become familiar enough with a person to effect a successful impersonation.

### Ring of Izmur

This is a magical item that combines the effects of a *ring of free action* and a *time stop* spell. It also provides a bonus of 3 to the Armor Class of the wearer. The *time stop* spell may be used up to three times per day, but not for more than ten uses altogether. The Armor Class benefit remains in effect until the wearer is successfully struck by an enchanted melee weapon, whereupon the bonus is lost. The *free action* aspect of the *ring* is continuous and permanent.

Those within the 15-foot radius of effect of the *time stop* spell are entitled to a saving throw vs. wand. Successful rolls negate the effects of the *time stop*.

### Eye of Donoagi

Donoagi is a fabled ancient evil dragon made of stone. Legend reports that she has been long asleep, awaiting a time when her faithful *stone priests* will construct an elaborate temple and cast a succession of powerful spells to reawaken her, allowing her return to the world.

The *eye of donoagi* is a 3"-diameter amulet that resembles a large tiger's eye. It has three functions: First, the *eye* allows the wearer to meld directly into stone and re-emerge at another point up to 100 feet distant, three rounds after the *melding*. While the wearer remains within the stone, he is invulnerable to all forms of attack, both mental and physical. For all practical purposes, the wearer ceases to exist for a short period time. However, a *stone shape* spell cast within one round upon the surface where the owner disappeared will inflict 3d6 points of damage upon him. Second, the *eye* also allows the wearer to phase through stone up to 2 feet thick at will. Finally, the *eye* will automatically transform any stone statue into a stone golem under the control of the owner (once per day).

A lich who forges the amulet is automatically able to manipulate it. Others must eat a stone before the amulet works for them. It can be used up to five times a day.



### Nails of Rending

These are prosthetic, 3"-long fingernails found in sets of five or ten. The nails are concealed within 1/2" tubes into which the tips of the fingers are put, whereupon they bind themselves to the wearer forever—the wearer's fingers may be cut off to remove them, but not the nails. For a lich, this is not of great consequence or pain. For a living person, however, a horror check is required: failure results in unconsciousness for 1d20 minutes, in addition to the effects described in the rules book of the RAVENLOFT® boxed set. Also, the pain is extreme, requiring the wearer to roll his Constitution score or less or permanently lose 1 point of that attribute. (A *restoration* spell will return the affected character's Constitution score to normal.) The pain only lasts for a few minutes, but bonding is instantaneous—regardless of the outcome of the horror and "pain" checks, the nails replace the person's natural fingernails.

These nails afford the wearer an additional 1d6 points of damage in barehanded melee attacks. In addition, when the nails strike armor, they have a chance to rend it, reducing the Armor Class benefit of that piece of armor by 1. Magical armor is entitled to a saving throw vs. lightning to avoid the effects (see table 29 in the DMG).

After the nails are worn for a few days, the wearer's hands, if they are not so already, become shriveled and grotesque, and appear dead. Even the application of but one nail will evoke this effect.

There is no method, short of employing a *wish* spell, to remove the nails once they are applied. If a *wish* is used to remove the nails, the wearer's hands will remain shriveled unless a *restoration* spell is cast upon them. This will restore the hands to their proper appearance.

The ends of the nails are made of metal, but they are as sensitive as the fingers they are attached to. Liches and other undead are immune to the pain of bonding and have no sensation from the nails.

### Potion of Spirit Flight

This potion causes the imbiber's spirit to depart its body. The physical body instantly dies and can only be resuscitated by a *resurrection* spell. Psychically, the effects are similar to the spell *astral travel* in that the drinker is now a disembodied, spiritlike creature floating about the Prime Material plane, invisible to normal sight and unable to communicate.

While in this form, the drinker is effectively removed from reality, unable to affect the physical world, and unable to be affected by it. The spirit is invulnerable to all forms of attack and is invisible to all forms of detection except through spells or devices designed to detect the presence of the alignment of the drinker. (Note that this spell is largely ineffective in Ravenloft.)

As stated, the spirit of the imbiber is unable to return to its body unless a *resurrection* spell is cast upon him. While in this state, he only is able to observe the physical world and travel to the astral plane at will. (Again, in Ravenloft *astral travel* is impossible.) If the astral plane is entered, it is vulnerable to any hazards endemic to that environment. Otherwise, the spirit will continue to exist for as long as its body is intact.

There is one circumstance in which the disembodied spirit is able to affect the physical world: The spirit is able to appear as a ghostly, visible form within mirrors. The spirit may not appear in any magically enchanted mirror, however. While visible, the spirit is able to move and make any gestures it desires within the confines of the mirror. Likewise, the spirit may appear at any size or scale within the mirror desired. The ghostly image can be maintained for 1d20 seconds each hour, after which the spirit must rest from the exertion of crossing planar boundaries, if only superficially.

Verbal communication is impossible, and the spirit and people in the physical world are unable to hear each other. Not even a *speak with dead* spell will aid in this endeavor.



CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Any land
FREQUENCY:	Very rare
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Night
DIET:	Psionic energy
INTELLIGENCE:	Supra-genius (19-20)
TREASURE:	A
ALIGNMENT:	Any evil
NO. APPEARING:	1
ARMOR CLASS:	0
MOVEMENT:	6
HIT DICE:	9+18
THACO:	11
NO. OF ATTACKS:	1
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1d8+2
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Psionics, <i>mind struck</i> power, psionics-draining touch

**SPECIAL DEFENSES:** Psionics, spell immunities, struck only by +1 or better weapons, phylactery

MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	M (6' tall)
MORALE:	Fanatic (17-18)
XP VALUE:	16,000

## PSIONICS SUMMARY:

Level	Dis/Sci/Dev	Att/Def	Score	PSPs
20	6/10/25	all/all	18	82

**Clairsentience**—*Sciences:* aura sight, object reading; *Devotions:* spirit sense.

**Psychokinesis**—*Devotions:* animate shadow.

**Psychometabolism**—*Sciences:* death field, life draining, shadow-form; *Devotions:* aging, cause decay, displacement, ectoplasmic form.

**Psychoportation**—*Sciences:* teleport; *Devotions:* astral projection (if not in Ravenloft), dimensional door, dream travel.

**Telepathy**—*Sciences:* domination, mindwipe, psychic crush, tower of iron will; *Devotions:* contact, ego whip ESP, id insinuation, inflict pain, intellect fortress, mental barrier, mind bar, mind blank, mind thrust, psionic blast, thought shield.

**Metapsionics**—*Sciences:* empower; *Devotions:* psionic sense, psychic drain, receptacle, wrench.

These powers are common to psionic liches, but it is not unusual for some to have different powers.

There are few who dare to argue that the power of a master psionist is any less than that of an archmage. Proof of this can be found in the fact that the most powerful psionists are actually able to extend their lives beyond the spans granted them by nature, just as powerful wizards are known to do.

Psionic liches look much like their magical counterparts. Their flesh has mummified, pulling it tight over their bones and giving them a gaunt, skeletal appearance. Their eye sockets are empty and burn with crimson pinpoints of light. Often, a psionic lich will be found in the clothes it favored in life. Because this can be anything from the grand robes of nobility to the plate armor of a mighty knight, it is impossible to spot these creatures by their garb. (Metallic armor, if worn, will lower the lich's psionic power score, as per *The Complete Psionics Handbook*, page 16; small shields will not do so.)

Psionic liches retain the abilities that they learned in life: languages, proficiencies, thieving skills, etc. Further, a psionic lich who was human may actually have been a dual-class character in life, and thus be able to employ psionic powers plus magical or clerical spells. Creatures with such abilities are rare, thankfully, but are truly terrible opponents.



**Combat:** Psionic liches seldom engage their foes personally, as they surround themselves with legions of minions. Many adventurers hence never learn the true nature of their enemy. When forced to engage in direct combat, however, psionic liches are among the most deadly opponents that any band of heroes is ever likely to face.

The emanations of power that shroud a psionic lich are detectable even by those without psychic powers. Those who come within 50 yards of such creatures will be affected by this aura, requiring a save vs. spell or become mind struck. Such characters make all attack and damage rolls at a +2 penalty and must double the casting time of any spells (which allows saving throws for victims at +2). The effects of this aura can be countered by any spell or psionic power that would diminish or remove fear or inspire bravery.

If the lich is able to deliver a touch attack in combat, the malignant aura of psionic power that encircles it rips at the opponent's life force, causing 1d8+2 points of damage. In addition, psionic characters will find their PSPs drawn away. Each physical blow will strip the victim of a number of PSPs equal to twice the number of points of damage the blow inflicted. This loss is not permanent, and the PSPs can be regained through normal means.

Just as normal liches have spent decades or even centuries in the research of new and unique magical powers, so too do the undead masters of the mind have powers undreamed of by mortal men. It is not at all uncommon for adventurers who come across these dreaded creatures to be confronted with psionic powers that have never been documented elsewhere. (These new powers will conform to the general standards established in the *Complete Psionics Handbook* for function, damage, area of effect, range, etc., but may differ greatly from standard powers in terms of the effects that they cause. Insight into the creation of new psionic powers can be gleaned from the section on spell research in the *DMG*. Further information can be gained from the *Forbidden Lore* boxed set for the RAVENLOFT® setting.)



Further, liches are able to employ magical items just as they did in life and may have quite a formidable collection of enchanted trinkets to use against adventurers.

It is important to note that psionic liches differ from the traditional ranks of the undead. Because the force sustaining them is mental and not mystical, they are far more resistant to spells, spell-like powers, or psionic sciences and devotions involving *charm*, *fear*, or the like. Treat them as having the equivalent of a 25 Wisdom for purpose of determining what spells they are resistant to (see the *Player's Handbook*, page 17, Table 5). Spells like *sleep* or *finger of death*, which base their effects upon a biological function in the spell recipient, also do not affect psionic liches; again, psionic powers similar to these spells are also ineffective (e.g., *life detection*).

Psionic liches can be turned by priests, paladins, and similar characters, but since they are not magical in nature, they are more resistant to this power than are other undead. Thus, they are turned on the "special" row of the Turning Undead table. Psionic liches are immune to harm from normal weapons but can be struck by weapons of +1 or better power. Spells or other powers based upon cold have no effect upon them. Other spells inflict normal damage on the lich. Psionic liches can be attacked in normal psionic combat, except as noted before.

In order to protect itself from destruction, a psionic lich employs a special form of phylactery (see "Ecology") that houses its life force. Although a lich may be defeated in combat, it cannot be truly destroyed unless its phylactery can be found and obliterated. As most liches will take great care to protect these vital objects from the prying hands of heroes, this can be quite a challenge.

**Habitat/Society:** Psionic liches are powerful espers who have left behind the physical demands of life in pursuit of ultimate mental powers. They have little interest in the affairs of the living, except as they relate to the lich's search for psychic mastery and knowledge. Those who encounter the lich usually do so when the creature feels that it must leave its self-imposed isolation for a time.

Psionic liches often hide themselves away in some place that "feels" safe to them. Since most of them can sense the auras and emanations of the world around them quite keenly, their judgment is usually sound. For the most part, however, these creatures will reside in places associated with death or learning. If the two can be combined in some way, all the better. For example, an ideal lair for a psionic lich might be the great library of a castle that was buried in a volcanic eruption long ago. Not only does the location bear the taste of death about it, for everyone in the castle was slain by the disaster, but it also has a solid foundation of knowledge for the lich to pursue research into the secrets of the mind.

When it comes out into the world, a psionic lich generally assembles a great network of minions. Curiously, these followers are seldom undead themselves. More often than not, they are young espers who seek to learn from an obvious master. What they often do not understand is that their leader has little interest in them apart from their role in any immediate plans. Once the master's goal has been accomplished, be it the retrieval of some ancient tome on psionic powers or the testing of a new psionic defense mode, the followers will be cast aside without thought. Those who do not simply leave when the lich demands it will probably find themselves mercilessly slain.

The first psionic lich encountered in Ravenloft was reported on the fringes of Bluetspur, the dread domain of the mind flayers, in the land of Kartakass. There is some evidence that the

creature was challenged and destroyed by Harkon Lukas, the master of that domain. Many scholars agree, however, that it seems probable that the lich escaped and survives to this day. Additional sightings of these horrible creatures leads one to believe that at least three more psionic liches have come into existence at various points in Ravenloft.

**Ecology:** Being undead, psionic liches have no place in the natural world as we know it. Although the power that transformed them is natural (not supernatural, like magic), the extent to which psionic liches have pursued their goals is not natural. By twisting the powers of their minds to extend their existence beyond the bounds of mortal life, psionic liches become exiles. Cast out from the land of the living, these creatures sometimes lament the foolishness that led them down the dark path of the undead.

By far the most important aspect of the existence of the psionic lich is the creation of its phylactery. To understand this mystical device, it is important to understand the process by which a psionicist becomes a lich. Before a psionicist can cross over into the darkness that is undeath, he must attain at least 18th level. In addition, he must be possessed of a great array of powers that can be bent and focused in ways new to the character.

The first step in the creation of a phylactery is the crafting of the physical object that will become the creature's spiritual resting place. Phylacteries come in all shapes, from rings to crowns, and from swords to idols. They are made from only the finest materials and must be fashioned by master craftsmen. Generally, a phylactery is fashioned in a shape that reflects the personality of the psionicist. The cost of creating a phylactery is 5,000 gp per level of the character. Thus, a 20th-level psionicist must spend 100,000 gp on his artifact.

Once the phylactery is fashioned, it must be readied to receive the psionicist's life force. This is generally done by means of the metapsionic empower ability, with some subtle changes in the way the psionicist uses the power that alters its outcome. In order to complete a phylactery, the psionicist must empower it with each and every psionic ability that he possesses. Although an object cannot normally be empowered with psychic abilities in more than one discipline, the unusual nature of the phylactery allows this rule to be broken. However, before "opening" a new discipline within the object, the would-be lich must transfer all of his powers from the first discipline into it. For example, if a character has telepathic and metapsionic abilities, he must complete the empowering of all of his telepathic powers before he begins to infuse the object with his metapsionic ones. Once discipline is "closed," it cannot be reopened.

During the creation of the phylactery, the psionicist is very vulnerable to attack. Each time that he gives his phylactery a new power, he loses it himself. Thus, the process strips away the powers of the psionicist as it continues. Obviously, the last power that is transferred into the phylactery is the empower ability. The effort of placing this ability within the phylactery drains the last essences of the psionicist's life from him and completes his transformation into a psionic lich. At the moment that the transformation takes place, the character must make a system-shock survival roll. Failure indicates that his willpower was not strong enough to survive the trauma of becoming undead; his spirit breaks up and dissipates, making him forever dead. Only the powers of a deity are strong enough to revive a character who has died in this way; even a *wish* will not suffice.





# Van Richten's Guide to the Lich

by Eric W. Haddock

**T**here is a black terror that amasses great authority in the farthest reaches of Ravenloft, quietly insinuating its sway upon the land like a creeping poison in the body: Its name is *lich*.

Until now, vampires have been the undisputed masters of darkness, but the sheer genius of the lich (coupled with its immortal quest for ever more powerful magic) has proven to be a malevolent threat to the cause of Goodness. Liches were once all-powerful wizards in life, yet they have sacrificed everything to leap beyond the bounds of humanity and acquire unspeakable necromantic mastery.

In the face of such might and malice, there appears to be but one hope:

Dr. Rudolph Van Richten, scholar and bane to all creatures of the night, has once again picked up quill and parchment—this time to expose this dreaded monster's darkest secrets! Within these pages the reader will learn of the lich's origins, its powers, its lair, and even its very psychological makeup as well as the keys to a successful hunt and termination. Deadly new minions and unique lich magicks are also brought to the fore.

Take back the night, all ye of courageous heart and keen blade! With each chime of the clock, the lich seeks to complete another of its diabolical schemes. Unchecked, the monster will obliterate the light of day, and Ravenloft is already much too dark. . . .

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£6.99 UK

